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# EMBASSY SIEGE



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HELL"**  
INTERVIEW WITH THE REAL  
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**THE DARING TACTICS AND  
LETHAL TRAINING BEHIND  
OPERATION NIMROD**



**THE FALL  
OF WARSAW**  
HOW THE NAZI WAR MACHINE  
CONQUERED ITS FIRST CAPITAL



**SCOTLAND'S  
REVENGE**  
FOLLOW THE BLOODY PATH  
FROM REBELLION TO UNION



**BARBARIAN  
BATTLEFIELD GENIUS**  
THE GOTHIC KING WHO  
CRUSHED THE ROMAN EMPIRE



**TANK HUNTERS**  
THE GERMAN TECH THAT HALTED  
BRITAIN'S ARMoured DOMINANCE

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# Waffen SS On Parade



WS341



WS336

Selected units from within the *Algemeine-SS* or 'General SS' were brought together and trained to a military standard that made them *combat-ready* for war. Originally called the *SS-Verfügungstrup* or 'armed SS' they became known as the 'Waffen SS' or 'fighting SS', in 1940.

During the Polish Campaign of 1939 and the 'Blitzkrieg' in the West in 1940 the actual battlefield performance of these new SS soldiers was of little significance to the overall success of the German Army's victory.

It did, however, prepare them for a rapid expansion and the creation of several all-new *Waffen SS* divisions.

This in turn allowed Hitler to include them in his 'order of battle' for the upcoming invasion of the Soviet Union... "Operation Barbarossa".

### UNIFORM CHANGES

These *Waffen SS* units that went to war in 1939 looked very different from their pre war comrades. Gone were the sinister black uniforms of parades and party rallies soon to be replaced by the more practical 'feldgrau' field gray uniform of the battlefield.

Among other major changes and innovations was the SS adoption of camouflage smocks and

helmet covers. Still though the *Waffen SS* also had occasion, now and then, to hold parades and put on a spectacular show and display of force.

### WARTIME PARADE

KING & COUNTRY's latest WSS release features figures that represent just such a wartime event.

Smartly turned out in their best 'Feldgrau' uniforms these SS troopers march past and line up to be inspected by their officers.

As can be seen the officers themselves wore their better quality, privately-purchased uniforms.

All of these new soldiers wear the 'cuff-title' of the 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler', the premier SS division of WW2. Among them is a senior NCO (*non commissioned officer*) proudly holding the specially-designed *Regimental Banner*.

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WS335

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**WS335** IN 1929 the entire SS political security organization (the *Schutz Staffel* or *Protection Squad*) numbered less than 300 men. By 1933, when the Nazis came to power, it had increased many fold... up to almost 30,000 members.

Between then and the outbreak of war in September 1939 the SS continued to grow and expand. It also sought for itself a combat role in the coming conflict alongside the regular German Army.



WS339

WS340

WS338

WS337

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### PLEASE NOTE

KING & COUNTRY has absolutely NO sympathy with the perverted and murderous ideology of The Third Reich and its adherents. Our interest is purely historical and educational.

# Welcome

**“I gripped my M-5 in both hands and thumbed the safety catch, assuring myself once again that it was off... My greatest fear now was of making a mistake that might endanger life – especially my own”**

– Robin Horsfall, *Fighting Scared*

**I**n the 21st century the battle against terrorism has seemingly re-defined war for a new era, where the streets of Western cities are the battlefields, and innocent civilians are turned into military targets. Of course, this form of warfare is sadly nothing new.

In 1980 the Iranian Embassy Siege pitted brutal terrorist tactics against the elite training and professionalism of the Special Air Service – all broadcast on live television to stunned audiences.

The result showed the world the immense capabilities of the SAS, who would mostly remain

anonymous for years. Operation Nimrod has since become the stuff of legend, and a truly important event in military history.



*Tim*

**Tim Williamson**  
Editor



**EMAIL**

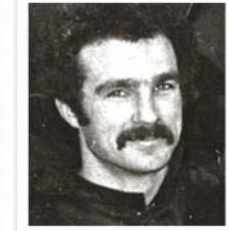
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## CONTRIBUTORS



### TOM GARNER

This issue Tom spoke with veterans of the Siege of Jadotville, a previously forgotten UN campaign that saw outnumbered Irish soldiers fighting for their lives against waves of mercenaries in the thick of the Katanga Conflict (p. 76).



### ROBIN HORSFALL

The Iranian Embassy Siege placed Britain's special forces on the world stage, showing not only their deadly precision, but also their peerless professionalism. Here SAS veteran Robin recalls Operation Nimrod from the inside (p.26)



### MICHAEL HASKEEW

This month Mike spoke with his friend, Vietnam veteran Sammy L. Davis, about the dramatic events that earned him the Medal of Honor, as well as his bizarre brush with Hollywood when Tom Hanks replaced him on the big screen! (p. 68).

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*Robin Horsfall recalls the events of Operation Nimrod over on page 26*

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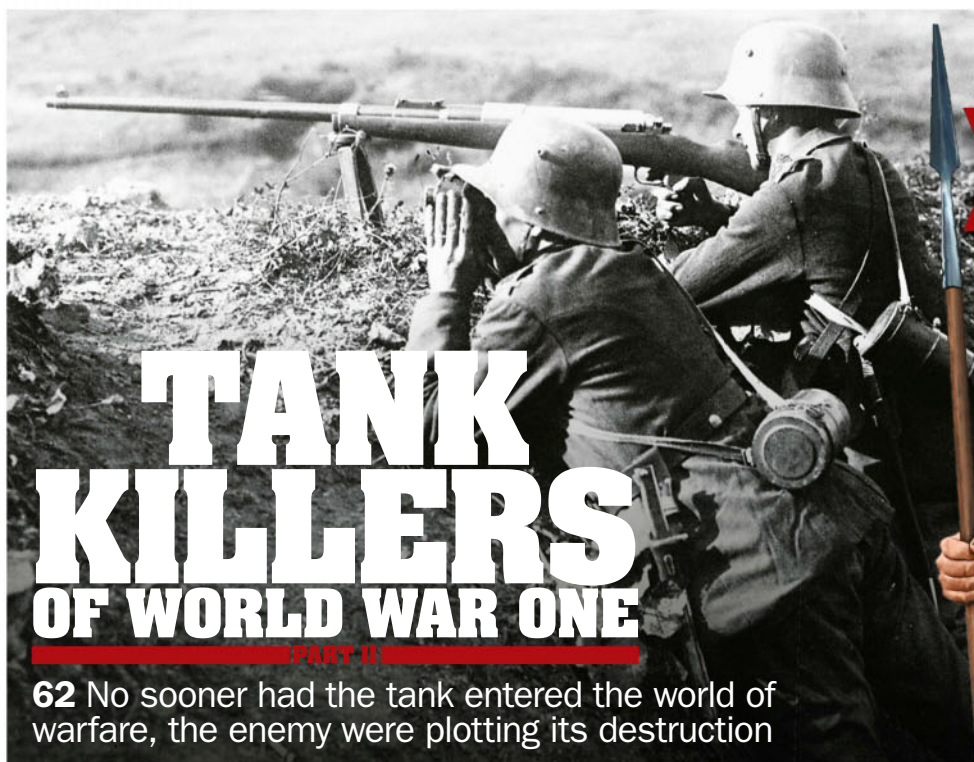


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54 A largely forgotten but crucial figure in ancient history



# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT

*Taken: 21 July, 2017*

A Russian T-72B MBT (main battle tank) emerges from a submerged position and opens fire, while on a river assault training exercise. First produced during the Cold War, the T-72 is fully operable in up to five metres of water, and is able to cross distances of around 1,000 metres wide – all while fully submerged.











**WAR**<sub>in</sub>  
**FOCUS**

**DESTINATION: IWO JIMA**

*Taken: 19 February, 1945*

An assault force of US Marines disembarks from their ship, to begin the attack on the shores of Iwo Jima. The American operation to take the Japanese stronghold would last over a month, as Marines struggled against a well-prepared and tenacious enemy.



# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## FORDSON FRONTLINE

*Taken: c. 1940s*

Members of the Women's Land Army at work in the fields with a Fordson tractor. At its peak, the Land Army numbered some 80,000 members, made up of volunteers and conscripts later in the war. The organisation was vital to the war effort as Nazi U-boats threatened to starve Britain into submission. The organisation wasn't disbanded until 1949.







# **WAR**<sup>in</sup> **FOCUS** **ON 'OLD BALDY'**

*Taken: c. 1952*

Straddling the 38th parallel, the frontline between North and South Korea, Hill 266 saw months of heavy fighting between UN and Communist forces. American, South Korean and Colombian troops all contributed to defending the position, nicknamed 'Old Baldy' after artillery fire stripped the hill of most of its trees.

After the famous First War of Scottish Independence, Scotland and England fought many further conflicts between the 14th and 16th centuries that finally ended with the 'Union of the Crowns' in 1603



# TIMELINE OF... ANGLO-SCOTTISH WARS

1332-1357

## SECOND WAR OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

Although Scotland's independence was officially recognised in 1328, the English continued to support Edward Balliol – a rival claimant to the Scottish throne – against the infant David II, Robert the Bruce's son. Despite many Scottish defeats, David managed to keep his throne.



David II of Scotland (left) with Edward III of England. David was captured at the Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346 and was a prisoner of the English for 11 years

## BATTLE OF HALIDON HILL

After Edward Balliol's short-lived assumption of the Scottish throne after the Battle of Dupplin Moor, Edward III of England openly declared his support and besieged Berwick. A relieving Scottish army was then defeated in Edward's first notable victory of his career.

The Battle of Halidon Hill taught Edward III the tactical usefulness of longbowmen, which he later used to great effect in France during the Hundred Years' War



19 July 1333

## BATTLE OF OTTERBURN

Decades of tension and political instability in England encouraged the Scots to invade as far south as Durham. At Otterburn, the Scots defeated an English surprise night attack that sealed the martial reputations of both James Douglas and Henry 'Hotspur' Percy.

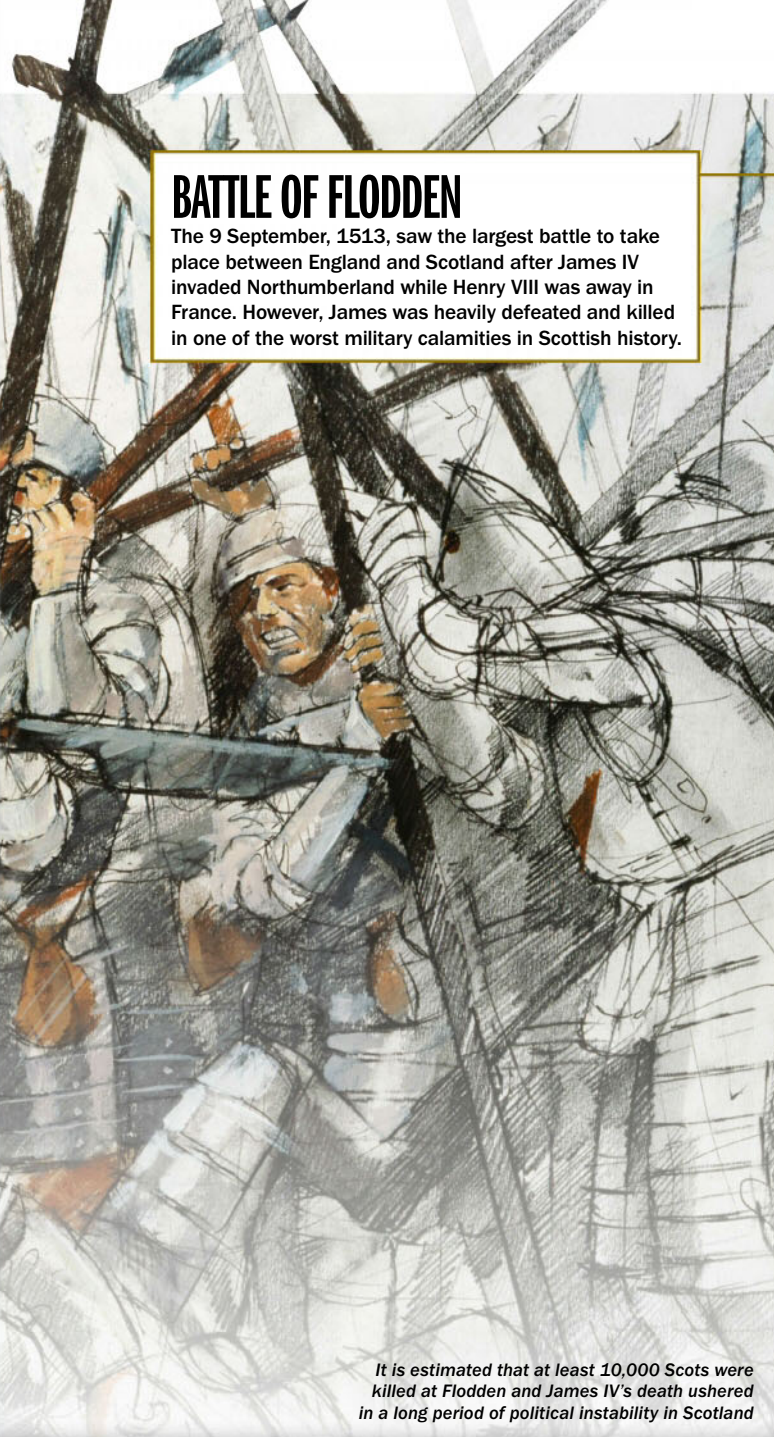
The Battle of Otterburn as depicted in Jean Froissart's Chronicles. The battle was one of the most notable Scottish victories since the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314



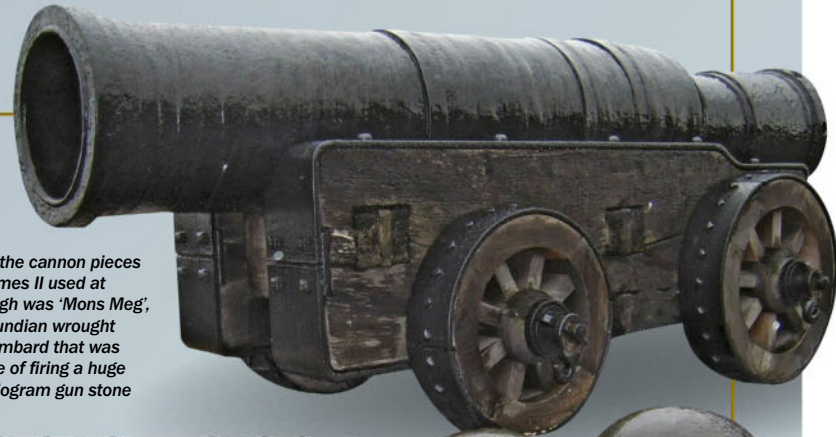
August 1388

## BATTLE OF FLODDEN

The 9 September, 1513, saw the largest battle to take place between England and Scotland after James IV invaded Northumberland while Henry VIII was away in France. However, James was heavily defeated and killed in one of the worst military calamities in Scottish history.



It is estimated that at least 10,000 Scots were killed at Flodden and James IV's death ushered in a long period of political instability in Scotland



One of the cannon pieces that James II used at Roxburgh was 'Mons Meg', a Burgundian wrought iron bombard that was capable of firing a huge 150-kilogram gun stone



## SIEGE OF ROXBURGH CASTLE

James II of Scotland aimed to recapture all English castles in Scotland while England was preoccupied with the Wars of the Roses. However, James was killed when one of his cannons exploded while he was besieging Roxburgh Castle.



## CAPTURE OF BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Richard, Duke of Gloucester marched on the Scottish border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed and captured it before marching on Edinburgh and forcing a truce. Berwick has remained English ever since.

Left: Edward III of England captured Berwick-upon-Tweed during the 1330s but it would be another 150 years before it became a permanently English town

1400-1402

3 August 1460

July-August 1482

9 September 1513

November 1542-March 1551

## BATTLE OF HOMILDON HILL

In 1400 Henry IV became the last English king to personally invade Scotland, but the campaign failed. However, Sir Henry Percy heavily defeated an invading Scottish force at the Battle of Homildon Hill two years later.



Scottish cavalry charge English archers at Homildon Hill. Despite appearances the battle was an English victory with the longbowmen playing a prominent role

**"WHEN THE SCOTS REFUSED, PUNITIVE ENGLISH EXPEDITIONS DEVASTATED SOUTHERN SCOTLAND"**

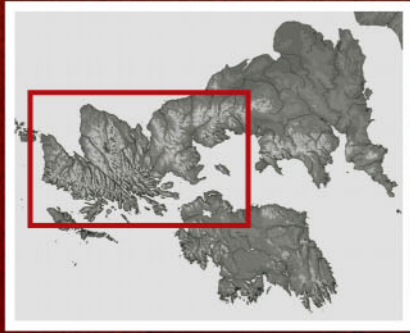


The fight over who should marry the young Mary, Queen of Scots, destabilised the Anglo-Scottish border region for decades with the last major skirmish not taking place until 1575

## THE ROUGH WOOING

Henry VIII attempted to unite the British crowns before it actually happened in 1603 by forcing Scotland into marrying the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to his son Edward. When the Scots refused, punitive English expeditions devastated southern Scotland while Mary was smuggled away to France.

Images: Getty



# THE BORDERLAND OF BLOODSHED

The area around the Anglo-Scottish border was one of the most dangerous regions of Britain for centuries, with dozens of battles and sieges being fought at great cost

## 1 BATTLE OF DUPPLIN MOOR

**AUGUST 1332 DUPPLIN MOOR, SCONE, PERTHSHIRE**

Edward Balliol attempts to wrest the Scottish throne from the young David II with English support. With a mostly English force of longbowmen, a large Scottish army is defeated and Edward is temporarily crowned as the king of Scots.

## 2 BATTLE OF NEVILLE'S CROSS

**17 OCTOBER 1346 NEVILLE'S CROSS, COUNTY DURHAM**

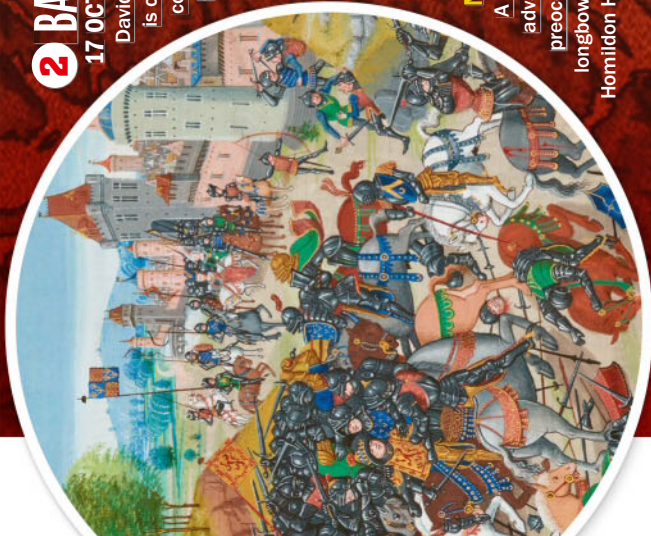
David II of Scotland attacks northern England while Edward III is campaigning in France but he is heavily defeated in wet conditions at Neville's Cross. As well as losing thousands of men David is captured and spends the next 11 years in an English prison.

*Left: The Battle of Neville's Cross as depicted in Jean Froissart's Chronicles. King David II is depicted during his capture wearing a surcoat depicting the royal arms of Scotland*

## 3 BATTLE OF HOMILDON HILL

**14 SEPTEMBER 1402 WOOLER, NORTHUMBERLAND**

A 10,000 strong army under Archibald, Earl of Douglas, advances into England to take advantage of Henry IV's preoccupation with a revolt in Wales. However, English longbowmen defeat the Scots largely by themselves at Homildon Hill with other troops taking very little part.



## 4 BATTLE OF SARK

**23 OCTOBER 1448 GRETA, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY**

Sark is the first Scottish victory against the English since Otterburn 60 years previously. Henry Percy, 2nd Earl of Northumberland breaks a truce and invades Scotland but is defeated by Hugh Douglas, Earl of Ormonde. Thousands of Englishmen are killed or drowned in the River Esk.

*Left: A 16th Century English bill from Arncliffe, North Yorkshire. Known as the 'Arncliffe Pike', it is reputed to have been carried by a local soldier to the Battle of Flodden*



## 5 BATTLE OF FLODDEN

**9 SEPTEMBER 1513 BRANXTON, NORTHUMBERLAND**

In similar circumstances to Neville's Cross, James IV of Scotland invades England while Henry VIII is fighting in France and, like David II, the Scottish king suffers a huge defeat. However, on this occasion James is not just defeated but is also killed along with many of his nobles.

*Right: The number of troops at the Battle of Flodden was greater than in any other battle between the English and the Scottish*

## SIEGE OF BROUGHTY CASTLE

**1547-1550 BROUGHTY FERRY, DUNDEE**

## FIRST BATTLE OF NESBIT MOOR

**1355 NEAR DUNS, BERWICKSHIRE**

## SECOND BATTLE OF NESBIT MOOR

**1402 NEAR DUNS, BERWICKSHIRE**

## BATTLE OF PIPERDEAN

**10 SEPTEMBER 1436 NEAR COCKBURNSPATH, BERWICKSHIRE**

## BATTLE OF DUNS

**1372 DUNS, BERWICKSHIRE**

## SIEGE OF HADDINGTON

**1548-49 HADDINGTON, EAST LOTHIAN**



## 6 BATTLE OF SOLWAY MOSS

24 NOVEMBER 1542 **SOLWAY MOSS, CUMBERLAND**  
3,000 English soldiers are victorious against a Scottish raiding force that numbers perhaps 13,000 men in a short battle in Cumberland. The news of the humiliating defeat reputedly hastens the death of James V and results in the ascension of his six-day-old daughter Mary to the Scottish throne.

## 7 BURNING OF EDINBURGH

7 MAY 1544 **EDINBURGH**  
The first major action of the 'Rough Wooing' of Scotland is a dramatic burning of Edinburgh and the local area by a sea-borne English force led by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. Many buildings are burned and looted with only Edinburgh Castle being able to completely hold out.

## 8 BATTLE OF PINKIE CLEUGH

10 SEPTEMBER 1547 **MUSSELBURGH, LOTHIAN**  
A large English force of 18,000 men supported by 30 warships invades Scotland in an ambitious campaign to gain territory. A 22,000 Scottish army is subsequently defeated at Pinkie Cleugh by superior English artillery and around 6,000 Scots are killed.

**BATTLE OF WESTER KINGHORN**  
6 AUGUST 1332  
BURNTISLAND, FIFE

**ENGLISH ENTRY INTO EDINBURGH**  
AUGUST 1482  
EDINBURGH

**BATTLE OF BOROUGHMUIR**  
30 JULY 1335  
BURGH MUIR, EDINBURGH

**BATTLE OF ANCRUM MOOR**  
27 FEBRUARY 1545  
NEAR JEDBURGH, SCOTTISH BORDERS

**BATTLE OF LOCHMABEN FAIR**  
22 JULY 1484  
LOCHMABEN, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

**BATTLE OF DORNOCK**  
25 MARCH 1333  
DORNOCK, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

**TREATY OF BERWICK**  
1357  
BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, NORTHUMBRIA

**BATTLE OF YEAVERING**  
1415  
YEAVERING, NORTHUMBRIA

**CAPTURE OF BERWICK-UPON-TWEED**  
JULY-AUGUST 1482  
BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, NORTHUMBRIA

**BATTLE OF HALIDON HILL**  
19 JULY 1333  
HALIDON HILL, NEAR BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, NORTHUMBRIA

**BATTLE OF OTTERBURN**  
AUGUST 1388  
NEAR OTTERBURN, NORTHUMBRIA

**CAPTURE OF ROXBURGH**  
3 AUGUST 1460  
ROXBURGH CASTLE, BORDERS REGION

**RAID OF THE REDESWARE**  
7 JULY 1575  
CARTER BAR, ANGL-SCOTTISH BORDER

**BATTLE OF HADDON RIG**  
24 AUGUST 1542  
KELSO, SCOTTISH BORDERS



Left: An English cavalry charge against Scottish pikemen at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh. English ships can be glimpsed in the background and their artillery was a factor in ensuring a major Scottish defeat  
Images: Alamy, Getty

“NEWS OF THE HUMILIATING DEFEAT REPUTEDLY HASTENS THE DEATH OF JAMES V AND RESULTS IN THE ASCENSION OF HIS SIX DAY-OLD DAUGHTER MARY TO THE SCOTTISH THRONE”

# FAMOUS BATTLE PINKIE CLEUGH

On 10 September, 1547, near Musselburgh in Scotland, Scottish and English Armies fought their largest, bloodiest (and last) battle

**M**arking the culmination of Henry VIII's policy of 'Rough Wooing' of Mary to coerce her marriage to his son Edward, Pinkie Cleugh should be better remembered than it is. Even though Henry had died in January 1547, the policy was continued by Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector of the nine-year-old Edward VI.

## Invasion Forces

Somerset invaded Scotland in early 1547 with a large army of around 17,000 men, supported by a fleet. He marched along the East coast of Scotland. To oppose this force the Earl of Arran raised an army consisting mainly of pikemen and archers. Sources list this army as 22,000 strong although English sources claim it was as large as 36,000 men. Arran brought his army to the far bank of the Esk River at Musselburgh to bar Somerset's advance. It was a strong position with no vulnerable flank; it would need to be assaulted directly.

Somerset's army consisted of county levies who were either billmen or archers. He also had mercenary arquebusiers, an artillery train and 4,000 cavalry. Arran too had artillery although his was more difficult to manoeuvre. He also had 2,000 cavalry, mainly made up of Border Reivers.

Somerset advanced and camped not far from the Scottish position. The day before the main battle, the cavalry were involved in a running skirmish and the Scottish cavalry were badly beaten and would take no part in the battle the following day.

## Battle is joined

Arran held a strong defensive position but his cavalry had been rendered ineffective and he was vulnerable to the artillery fire of the English. What is more, the English fleet anchored in the Firth of Forth was also in position to bombard his lines. The English could soften up the Scottish forces and assault them at their leisure. For these reasons, Arran decided to attack the English, using his pike formations as a shock weapon in three massive columns.

Arran charged his pike formations towards the English (who had chosen that moment to manoeuvre towards the right, thinking the Scottish would remain on the defensive). The Scottish formations took the disorganised English infantry formations by surprise. If this had been purely an infantry battle, Arran could have scored a remarkable victory. Two factors favoured the English: the fleet and the cavalry.

The bombardment of the eastern-most pike column decimated it and caused it to collide with its neighbour as they tried to avoid the naval

gunfire. The lightly armed highland archers were the worst affected. The two columns combined into one and pushed on. Somerset realised that he would have to use his cavalry to charge the pike formation. This was counter-intuitive as one of the pike formation's main strengths was to be able to resist cavalry charges. It was also not what his cavalry expected to do and the horses were unprepared and unarmoured.

Somerset, however, did not need his cavalry to break the Scottish ranks, but only to engage and delay them in order for his infantry, artillery and arquebusiers to have time to reorganise. The cavalry charged and fought savagely but were defeated and forced back, losing their standard in the process.

## The decisive moment

The cavalry action was enough, however, to halt the advance of the Scottish pike formations and to provide time for the English infantry and artillery to get into position. They now fired deadly volleys into the immobile and isolated pike formations who had little missile and artillery support left. The Scottish resolve evaporated and they threw down their pikes to flee.

The English cavalry, recovered from their mauling, pursued the fleeing Scottish forces and cut them down without mercy. The English lost 500 men that day; Scottish losses have been estimated as high as 10,000 but probably closer to 5,000 with 1,500 taken prisoner. Even though thousands of Scottish dead littered the field, the princess Mary, the purpose of the whole expedition, escaped to France.

**"ARRAN DECIDED TO ATTACK THE ENGLISH, USING HIS PIKE FORMATIONS AS A SHOCK WEAPON IN THREE MASSIVE COLUMNS"**

Right: A letter from Edward VI to the Duke of Somerset after the battle

Dereft vnde by your letters and reporie of the messenger, we haue in good length vnderstanded to our great comfirt, the good successe, it hathe pleased god to graunt vs against the Scots by your good courage and wise foresight, for the wich and other the benefites of god. heaped vpon vs, like as we ar most bounden to yeld him most humble thankes, and to seke by al waies we mai, his true honoer, So do we giue vnto you, good vnde our most hartie thankes, praying you to thanke also most hartelie in our name, our good cosin therie of Warwike, and all the othere of the noble men, gentlemen, and others that haue serued in this iourna, of Whose service they shall all be Well assured, we will not (god graunte vs lief) shew our selves vmmindfull, but be redy euer to consider the same as any occasion shall serue. yeven at our house of Orlandes, the eighteneith of Septem - ber.

your good newe  
Edward

Left: Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector. Commander of the English at Pinkie Cleugh



**“THE SITUATION FOR MAURICE WAS NOW DIRE, AND THE ANNIHILATION HE HAD FEARED WAS A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY— WITH HIS LINE OF RETREAT CUT OFF, THERE WOULD BE NO ESCAPE”**

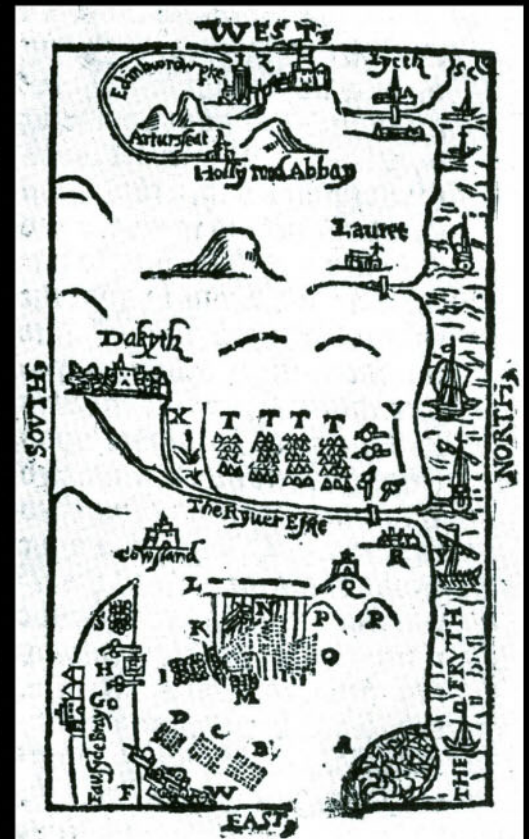


# THE ORIGINAL BATTLEFIELD MAP?

**THE BATTLE OF PINKIE CLEUGH SHOULD BE BETTER KNOWN SINCE, BECAUSE OF IT, WE POSSESS THE FIRST EYEWITNESS BATTLE MAP**

As military historians, we are all familiar with battle maps showing the dispositions and movements of troops in battle. Most of these, however, were written by historians who were not present but used the written sources, some of whom were not present themselves. Many such maps come from centuries later and may not be reliable at all. For Pinkie Cleugh, however, we are remarkably well informed of the battle (and the whole campaign) since the Duke of Somerset's secretary, William Patten, accompanied the expedition and wrote an eyewitness account of the campaign, *The Expedition into Scotlande of Edward Duke of Somerset*, and published it less than a year later. Patten's account includes a map of the battle of Pinkie Cleugh and it is the earliest eye-witness battle map we possess. The map is both familiar and remarkable - it shows the troops' dispositions, and the important aspects of the battle, the fleet and the artillery as well as the camps of both armies and the decisive moments.

*Below: William Patten's map of the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh set the pattern for battle maps for centuries to come*



Images: Alamy, Getty

# IN THE RANKS

Britain's wars saw troop types from every walk of life involved, from heavily armoured knights to peasant infantry

A great variety of troop types encompassed both sides of the conflict, including not only knights but lightly armoured mounted borderers, wealthy armoured infantry, peasant infantry and highlanders. These troop types used all manner of weaponry from pikes and bills to longbows and two-handed swords. During the period of the wars, warfare developed from 'typical' medieval battles into the age of gunpowder.

## SCOTTISH PIKEMAN

THE PIKE WAS ONE OF THE MAIN WEAPONS OF INFANTRY FORMATIONS THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE AGES AND SOME PIKE FORMATIONS (SUCH AS THE SWISS) BECAME FAMOUS

Units of lowly peasant infantry were equipped with the long pike because of its effectiveness against cavalry, its relatively cheap cost, and training in its use could be quite simple (although some units could affect complex manoeuvres too). We are told the Scottish pikes at Flodden were five

yards in length (4.5 metres). Units of pikemen could achieve victory against cavalry and other infantry formations (such as at the Battle of Sark in 1448) but the Scottish pikemen were decisively defeated and shown to be outdated by the English billmen at the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

**"THE SCOTTISH PIKEMEN WERE DECISIVELY DEFEATED AND SHOWN TO BE OUTDATED BY THE ENGLISH BILLMEN"**

## BORDER REIVER

THE CONTENTIOUS BORDER BETWEEN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND WAS RULED THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD BY OUTLAWS AND BORDER LORDS

The devastation of the border regions between England and Scotland throughout the period saw the rise of groups of men who would plunder indiscriminately on both sides of the border. They reached as far as Edinburgh and Yorkshire. Whether as mercenaries or pressed into service the reivers, known as Steel Bonnets from their helmets, formed units of light cavalry in armies of the period. They were brilliant light cavalry and played an important part in the battles of Flodden and Salway Moss in 1542. They were also known as 'prickers' because they could attack with spears and then wheel and escape before they could be attacked themselves.

Left: Reivers were fast, lightly armoured cavalry units often with opportunistic tendencies



## ENGLISH BILLMAN

FOLLOWING WARFARE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE CONTINENT, THE ENGLISH ADOPTED THE HOOKED AND SPIKED BILL AS THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR INFANTRY FORMATIONS

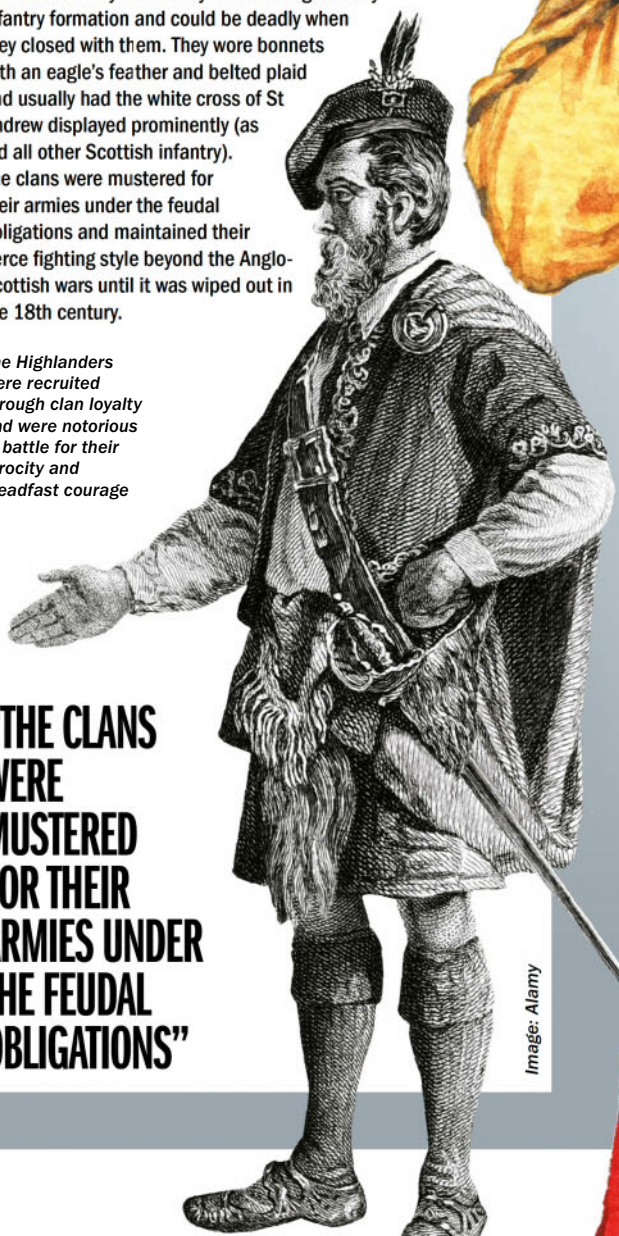
From the late 15th century onwards, formations of English yeoman or peasant infantry were armed with the bill rather than the pike. Recruited from the lowest sections of society, they were usually armoured with a steel cap and a quilted jack or brigantine. The bill combined a curved blade with a spike on the tip and back of the blade. Although shorter than the pike they combined the qualities of both a spear and an axe and their formations were more manoeuvrable than pike blocks.

## SCOTTISH HIGHLANDER

THE HIGHLAND CLANS WERE OFTEN RECRUITED TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE OTHER UNITS OF SCOTTISH INFANTRY, BRINGING THEIR UNIQUE BRAND OF TERRIFYING WARFARE TO THE FRAY

Drawn from the men of each clan and led by their chieftain, the highlanders provided Scottish armies with infantry armed with studded targe shield and sword. Others would have wielded the two-handed claymore. They would charge enemy infantry formation and could be deadly when they closed with them. They wore bonnets with an eagle's feather and belted plaid and usually had the white cross of St Andrew displayed prominently (as did all other Scottish infantry). The clans were mustered for their armies under the feudal obligations and maintained their fierce fighting style beyond the Anglo-Scottish wars until it was wiped out in the 18th century.

*The Highlanders were recruited through clan loyalty and were notorious in battle for their ferocity and steadfast courage*



**"THE CLANS WERE MUSTERED FOR THEIR ARMIES UNDER THE FEUDAL OBLIGATIONS"**

Image: Alamy



Colour illustrations: Hemesh Alles - The Art Agency

# PIKE VS BILL

We might consider that the victories of the English decided the matter, but which was the more effective weapon?

**W**hen we read of the formations of Scottish and English armies in the Anglo-Scottish Wars, we read of the levies of the English being made of archers and billmen, whereas the levies on the Scottish side comprised archers and pikemen. The pike and the bill then were the defining infantry weapons of the wars.

The Battle of Flodden in 1513 is often described as the victory of the bill over the pike and yet the Scottish continued to use the pike (such as at Pinkie Cleugh in 1547) and, as an infantry weapon, pike formations remained at the cutting edge of infantry tactics and survived into the 18th century, long after the bill had ceased to be used on the battlefield. This, of course, had to do with other factors such as the rise of infantry firearms and musketry, but the pike was considered essential long after its counterpart was rendered obsolete.

## The pike

The long, spear-like, pike made an appearance in medieval armies from the early 14th century onwards, such as the schiltrons of Scottish armies at Bannockburn in 1314 although its origins may stretch back to the Macedonian sarissa of Alexander the Great's armies. Scottish pikes could reach 5 yards in length (4.5 metres) although others reportedly reached as much as 7.5 metres in length. They had a heavy wooden shaft (usually ash) and a bladed iron head.

Pikes were designed for two-handed use, and infantrymen therefore needed a secondary weapon. The appeal of the pike was that they were relatively cheap to produce (certainly in relation to swords) and could be used with only rudimentary training by levies. A pike formation could present a mass of iron points towards the enemy since the pikes of several ranks could project beyond the first rank of men.

This made it ideal for stopping cavalry charges although such formations were vulnerable in the flanks and were at a disadvantage in close combat. These weaknesses could be alleviated by combing pike formations with other units which offered them protection. The pike has been seen

**“THE SCOTTISH ARMIES OF THE PERIOD BROUGHT IN FRENCH EXPERTS TO TRAIN THEIR MEN IN THE USE OF THE PIKE”**

as primarily a defensive weapon although such units were capable of delivering shock charges, which were hard to stop. Complex manoeuvres could be achieved with pike formations although this required a great deal more training than available to peasant levies. The plight of the Scottish formations during the Anglo-Scottish wars revealed the shortcomings of pike formations.

Famous units of pikemen existed such as the Swiss and the Landsknechts, and these were rightfully feared on the battlefields of Europe. The Scottish armies of the period brought in French experts to train their men in the use of the pike. When the Scottish charged in three columns at Pinkie Cleugh, that manoeuvre was in emulation of the text books and famed Swiss tactics. Used correctly the pike provided a potent weapon on the battlefield well into the era of firearms, offering protection to musketeers who, in turn, offered protection to the pikemen. The pike didn't become truly obsolete until the advent of effective bayonets on muskets.

## The bill

This English bill was similar to the halberd (and many similar weapons) although it had a curved blade. These two-handed weapons mounted an axe-bladed weapon and spike on a shaft, usually 5 to 6 feet in length. Originally developed from agricultural tools and designed to unhorse mounted opponents, these weapons predated the pike, although they went through a number of developments such as the lengthening of the spike to allow units to deal with pike-armed enemies.

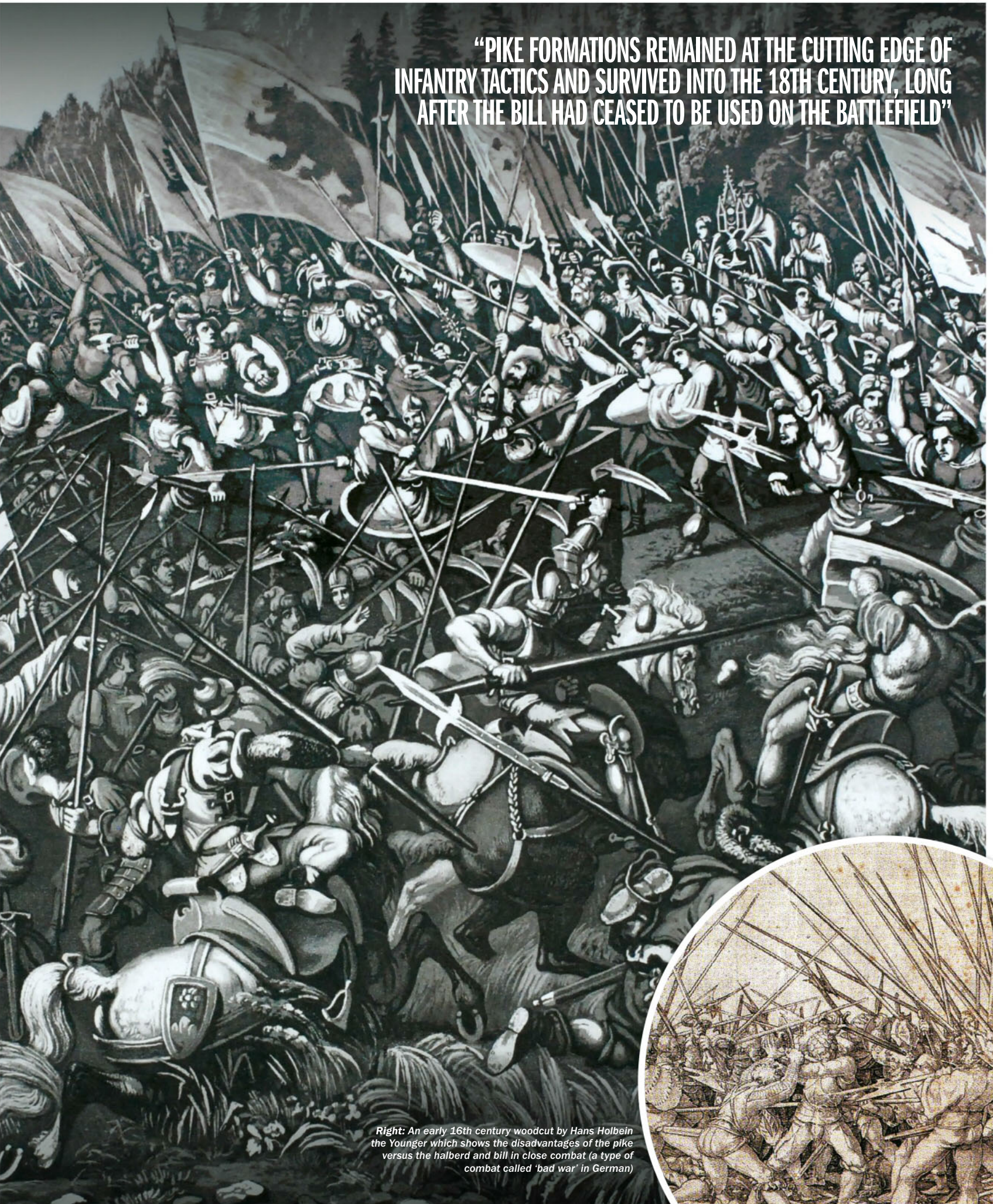
The English continued to use the bill and longbow long after continental armies adopted the pike, even into the age of the arquebus. Like the pike, both bill and halberd were cheap to produce and it was relatively easy to train men in their use. They also had a distinct advantage at close-quarters over the pike. Some units (such as Swiss mercenaries) which were originally armed with the halberd later adopted the pike in the 15th century. Halberds and bills remained in use for many centuries although they became a primarily symbol of status from the 17th century onwards.

The victory of the English bill over the Scottish pike in the battles of the Anglo-Scottish wars, especially at Flodden and Pinkie Cleugh were due to other factors than the superiority of the bill over the pike. The victories of the English in these battles may have led to their preferring the bill and longbow long after the rest of Europe had moved to 'modern' pike and firearms tactics.

An illustration of the battle of Laupen (1339). Pike tactics would not have changed much although the Swiss wore the white cross to identify them (just as the Scottish wore the cross of St Andrew at Flodden)



**“PIKE FORMATIONS REMAINED AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF INFANTRY TACTICS AND SURVIVED INTO THE 18TH CENTURY, LONG AFTER THE BILL HAD CEASED TO BE USED ON THE BATTLEFIELD”**



*Right: An early 16th century woodcut by Hans Holbein the Younger which shows the disadvantages of the pike versus the halberd and bill in close combat (a type of combat called 'bad war' in German)*



# KINGS & WARLORDS

The conflicts around Britain's northern border forged or broke the reputations of powerful men from both kingdoms in equal measure

## DAVID II 1324-71 SCOTLAND THE CAPTIVE GUARANTOR OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

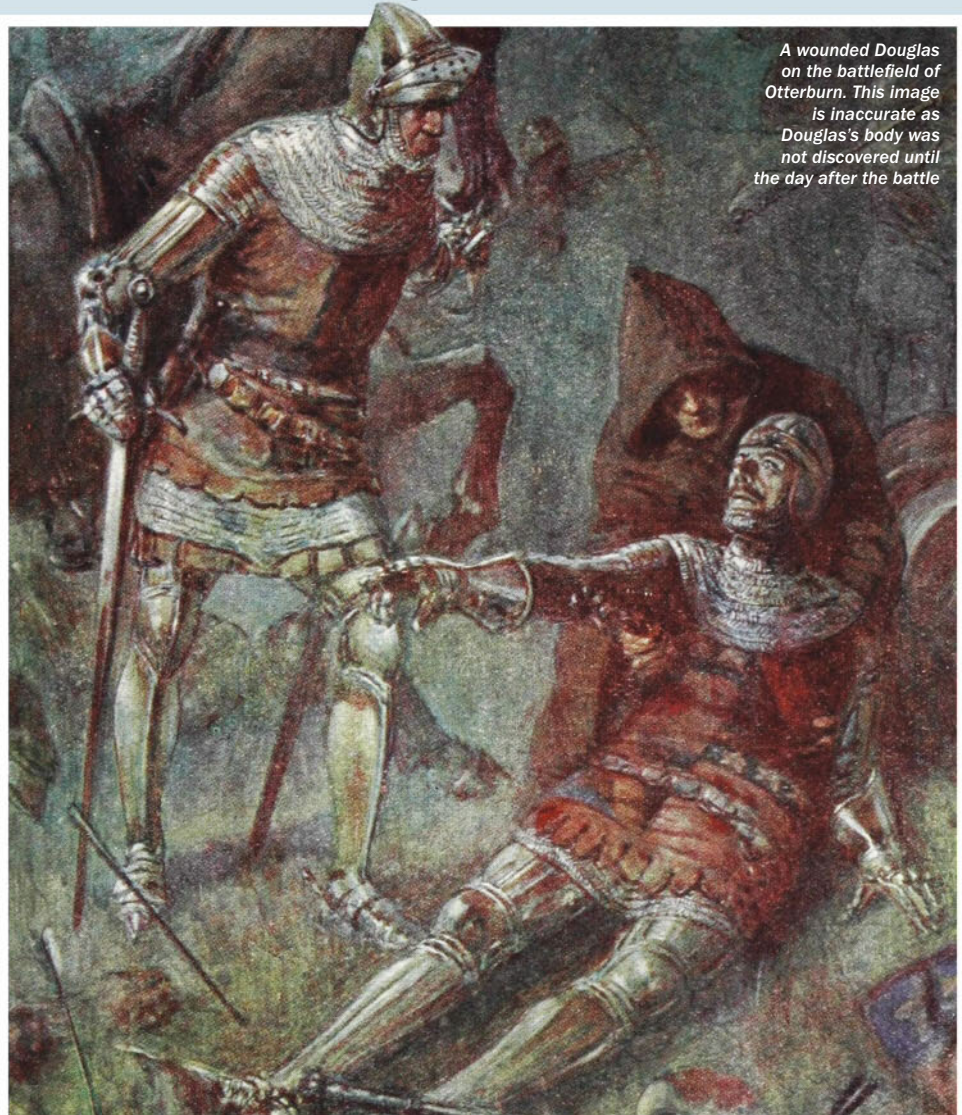
David's reign fell in the shadow of his more famous father, Robert I 'the Bruce', the victor of Bannockburn. When Robert died in 1329 Scotland's independence had been recognised by England for just a year and David inherited the throne aged only five years old. The English acceptance of Scottish sovereignty was extremely reluctant and warfare raged during the 1330s while David was sent to France for his safety.

David returned to Scotland in 1341 and led three raids into England to assert his authority against Edward III. As an ally of the French, David then invaded England in 1346 while Edward was campaigning in France. Many monastic lands were devastated until David was decisively defeated and captured at the Battle of Neville's Cross.

The king remained a prisoner in England for 11 years but when he was released he ruled firmly in Scotland and managed to ensure that his realm remained a separate kingdom.

**"MANY MONASTIC LANDS WERE DEVASTATED UNTIL DAVID WAS DECISIVELY DEFEATED"**

*David II fought bravely at Neville's Cross and sustained two arrow wounds to the head as well punching one of his captors in the face with his mailed gauntlet*



*A wounded Douglas on the battlefield of Otterburn. This image is inaccurate as Douglas's body was not discovered until the day after the battle*

## JAMES DOUGLAS, 2ND EARL OF DOUGLAS 1358-88 SCOTLAND THE DETERMINED ENEMY OF THE ENGLISH

Douglas came from a fighting family and was an active and powerful figure in Scottish politics. Unlike his king, Robert II, Douglas was keen for war with England and led a series of raids into English territory in 1384 and 1385, with French backing.

The Scots again renewed the intermittent conflict with England in 1388 and Douglas played a leading role. This was not a national Scottish army but a force whose primary allegiance was to the powerful earl. Douglas raided as far south as Newcastle upon Tyne where he besieged the town for three days. In one skirmish during the siege Douglas's men captured the pennon of Sir Henry 'Hotspur' Percy and this loss provoked Hotspur to pursue the withdrawing Scots. The final clash came at the Battle of Otterburn where Douglas defeated an English night attack and Hotspur was captured. However, despite a famous victory Douglas had been killed in the fighting.



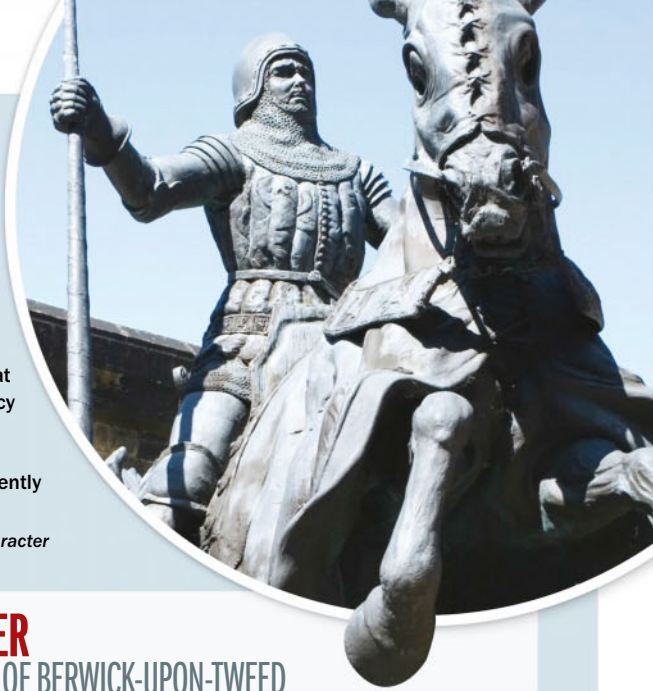
## SIR HENRY PERCY 1364-1403 ENGLAND THE LEGENDARY 'HOTSPUR'

The Percy family were one of the most powerful Border warlord dynasties that often led the defence of northern England against the Scots. Sir Henry Percy was the eldest son of the first earl of Northumberland and knighted by Edward III in 1377. During the 1380s Percy travelled far by first fighting in Ireland and then crusading in Prussia and Asia Minor but his reputation was earned fighting on home territory along the Scottish border.

The Scots nicknamed Percy 'Hotspur' as a tribute to his advancing speed and readiness to attack. Although he was captured and ransomed

after the Battle of Otterburn, he was known as a powerful knight and played a crucial role in helping Henry IV usurp the English throne from Richard II. As an experienced Warden of the East March, Percy inflicted a crushing defeat on the Scots at the Battle of Homildon Hill. Percy subsequently rebelled against Henry IV when he felt that his family had not been adequately rewarded for their services. Percy was subsequently killed at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403.

*Right: Sir Henry Percy is most famous as a major character in William Shakespeare's history play Henry IV, Part I*



## RICHARD, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER 1452-85 ENGLAND THE FINAL CONQUEROR OF BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Gloucester is better known to history as King Richard III, one of the most notorious monarchs in English history. As a military commander he is most famous for being decisively defeated and killed at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, but before his controversial assumption of the crown he was a respected soldier whose greatest achievement permanently altered the Anglo-Scottish border.

As the youngest brother of Edward IV, Gloucester had been a close military subordinate who had successfully fought in the Yorkist victories at Barnet and Tewkesbury against the House of Lancaster. At Tewkesbury Gloucester had led the vanguard and was both constable and admiral of England. When war broke out with Scotland in 1482 Gloucester led the campaign and advanced as far north as Edinburgh where he holed up King James III in the capital's castle. Although he eventually withdrew from Scotland, Gloucester had captured the border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed and it became a permanently English town. This was highly significant as Berwick had previously changed hands 13 times between England and Scotland.

*Left: Gloucester's achievement in securing Berwick-upon-Tweed for England was generously rewarded with extensive grants of land in Cumberland and the hereditary wardenship of the English West March*

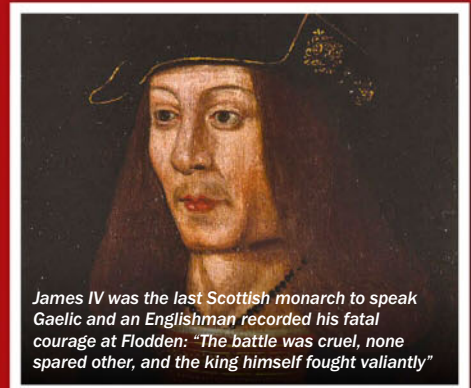
## JAMES IV 1473-1513 SCOTLAND THE TRAGIC RENAISSANCE KING

James IV was one of Scotland's most capable monarchs who brought the Renaissance to his small northern kingdom, but he was destined to become the most high profile victim of the Anglo-Scottish Wars.

Spirited and courageous, James was also a highly educated man who could speak several languages. He introduced the printing press to Scotland in 1505 and was noted for expanding the Royal Scots Navy. James founded two royal dockyards, increased the size of the fleet and

cleared Scottish waters of pirates. One of his newly commissioned warships, the 'Great Michael', weighed 11,000 tonnes, was 240 feet in length and was the largest ship in Europe at that time.

Nevertheless, James was a rash general who led Scotland into a military disaster. In 1513 he commanded one of the largest Scottish forces ever to invade England but at the Battle of Flodden he made poor tactical and strategic decisions. The result was a disastrous defeat and around 10,000 Scottish dead, including the king.

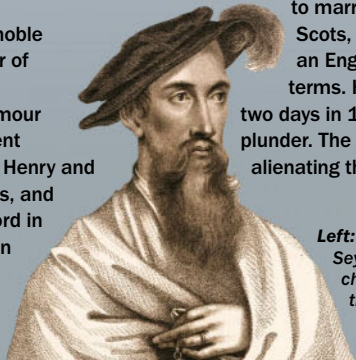


*James IV was the last Scottish monarch to speak Gaelic and an Englishman recorded his fatal courage at Flodden: "The battle was cruel, none spared other, and the king himself fought valiantly"*

## EDWARD SEYMOUR, DUKE OF SOMERSET c.1500-52 ENGLAND THE 'ROUGH WOOER' OF SCOTLAND

Seymour is an often forgotten but important figure in British history. As the Lord Protector of the boy-king Edward VI of England, Seymour was monarch in all but name and before and during his protectorate he had a significant military impact on the Anglo-Scottish Wars.

Born to an ancient Wiltshire noble family, Seymour was the brother of Jane who became the third and favourite wife of Henry VIII. Seymour immediately became a prominent courtier as the brother-in-law of Henry and uncle to Edward, Prince of Wales, and he was created as earl of Hertford in 1537. He was then steadily given larger military appointments such as Warden of the Scottish



Marches, lord high admiral and lieutenant general in the north.

In 1543 Seymour came to prominence during a major war known as the 'Rough Wooing'. The conflict arose from Henry VIII's forceful attempt to marry the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, to his heir Edward. Seymour led an English army into Scotland to force terms. His forces pillaged Edinburgh for two days in 1544 and seized ships in Leith for plunder. The English achieved little apart from alienating the Scots but Seymour returned the

*Left: Henry VIII's instructions to Seymour for his 1544 campaign were characteristically harsh: "Put all to the sword, burn Edinburgh Town"*

following year to force not just the royal marriage but also a political union. The 1545 campaign was characterised by the punitive destruction of castles, monasteries and villages along the route to Kelso and Jedburgh but the Scots did not submit.

Henry VIII died in January 1547 and Seymour was appointed duke of Somerset and lord protector to his nine-year-old nephew Edward VI. Seymour's regency was initially extremely powerful and he even used the royal 'we' in reference to himself. Defeating Scotland became Seymour's highest priority and he led a 19,000-strong army across the border. The Scots were heavily defeated at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh on 10 September 1547 and Seymour intended to garrison the country and introduce Protestantism. However, his ambitious plans were thwarted by French intervention and growing rebellions and political discontent in England. Seymour was eventually executed in 1549 and his legacy in Scotland was nothing but debts and wanton destruction.



# OPERATION NIMROD



## WORDS ROBIN HORSFALL

Robin joined the SAS in 1978 and was a member of the Nimrod assault team. He went on to serve with the Regiment during the Falklands War, then left the British Army two years later.

Today he is a professional speaker, sharing his knowledge with audiences around the world. His autobiography, *Fighting Scared*, details his journey from a troubled childhood

to serving in the world's elite military and beyond. In this brief history of Operation Nimrod, Robin has included extracts from *Fighting Scared*, which is available now on Kindle.

**“THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ALLOCATED A GENEROUS BUDGET AND ORDERED THE SAS TO FORM A COUNTER-TERRORIST TEAM AT THEIR BASE IN HEREFORD, UK. THE TEAM HAD TO BE READY TO MOVE ANYWHERE AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE – THEIR OPERATIONAL NAME WAS PAGODA”**

On 30 April, 1980, six terrorists stormed the Iranian Embassy in London and took 23 hostages. After days of negotiation, one SAS team was tasked with ending the siege. This is their story, as told by one of their number

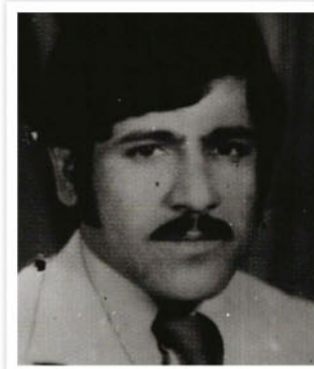
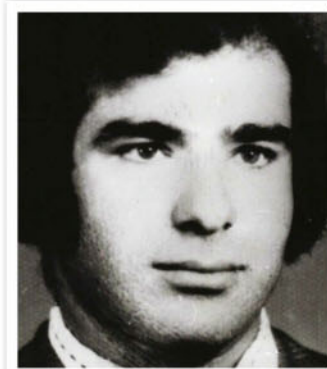
In 1976, the Special Air Service (SAS) returned to the UK from a secret war in Oman. Their experience of fighting an infantry war with artillery and air support was of very little use on the streets of Northern Ireland and they struggled to find a new role for themselves. Flexible as always, they found their niche in a new field of warfare – counter-terrorism.

At the Munich Olympic Games in 1972, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) murdered 11 Israeli athletes and a police officer during a botched rescue attempt. This tragedy exposed the need for an effective, highly trained force that would deal with incidents where hostages were held to ransom for political objectives. The British Government allocated a generous budget and ordered the SAS to form a counter-terrorist team at their base in Hereford, UK. The team had to be ready to move anywhere at a moment's notice. Their operational name was 'Pagoda'.

Between 1970 and 1980, terrorist groups such as West Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the PLO carried out successful and deadly operations. They drew media attention to their issues and committed atrocities, while often escaping unmolested. The most extreme example occurred on 4 November 1979, when Iranian Revolutionary Guards took over the United States Embassy in Tehran. Eighteen months later, on 24 April 1980, President Jimmy Carter sent in US special forces to rescue the hostages who had been held for 444 days. Operation 'Eagle Claw' failed, with the tragic loss of eight American lives. Following that disaster, the morale of the Western world plunged to an all-time low.

Encouraged by the perceived weakness of Western democracies, Iraq's ruler Saddam Hussein looked for an opportunity to take advantage in his ongoing war with Iran. Sami Mohammed Ali, an officer in the Iraqi Secret Service, spent the first months of 1980 training a six-man team of young activists. They came from Arabistan, an oil-rich area in the south of Iran. The men wanted autonomy for their region following Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution.

In response to Arabistani demands, the revolutionary government of Iran arrested and imprisoned 91 people without trial. Sami's team planned to take over the Iranian Embassy at Princes Gate in London and hold the staff as hostages. They would demand the release of the Arabistani prisoners and draw international attention to their cause.



Sami told his group that other Arab countries supported their mission, while also assuring them that when their mission was over, Arab ambassadors would negotiate their safe return to Iraq.

When Sami's team arrived in London at the beginning of April, he provided them with semi-automatic pistols, automatic machine pistols and Russian-manufactured hand grenades. These were allegedly delivered to the UK in Iraqi diplomatic bags. The scene was set for yet another terrorist victory.

### The siege begins

Sami Mohammed Ali deployed his team in London, at 11:30, on Wednesday 30 April, 1980. He then took a taxi to Heathrow Airport to make his escape from the country. By pure coincidence, at 11:25, embassy staff invited their door guard, Police Constable Trevor Lock, to come inside for a cup of coffee. While he was inside, the six-man terrorist team entered the open door and shot a long burst of automatic fire into the ceiling. Within minutes they had secured the four-storey, 54-room building and had taken 23 hostages. These included 19 embassy staff, Trevor Lock, BBC sound recordist Sim Harris, BBC news producer Chris Cramer and Syrian journalist Mustapha Karkouti, who had all been inside applying for visas.

The response by the Metropolitan Police, under the command of Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Dellow, was immediate and efficient. The building was secured front and rear and all of the adjacent buildings were evacuated.

Terrorist leader Salim immediately made demands for the release of the Arabastani prisoners and autonomy for his region. He gave a deadline of 24 hours, expiring at noon the next day, and threatened to kill all of the hostages if his demands were not met.

In Downing Street, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's cabinet assembled at the cabinet office briefing room known as 'Cobra' to discuss

their response. Thatcher was adamant that she would not give in to terrorists, but she would not authorise a military assault unless the terrorists killed a hostage. Until that happened, her policy was to contain the situation, remain calm and hope that the police could negotiate the release of the hostages and the surrender of the terrorists – without casualties.

In Hereford, the Pagoda team were preparing for a routine training exercise in Edinburgh with the Scottish police. The first indication that something had changed was when the noon move to Scotland was postponed.

"Big Bob smiled coldly. 'My Tikka is ready,' he said, closing one eye and squeezing an imaginary trigger. At about midday, Major [Gullen] called us into the team room... The exercise was off."

The team spent the following seven hours listening to the BBC news and hoping for permission to move.

By 19:00, no authorisation had been received from the government, so SAS Colonel Mike Rose took the initiative and moved his men closer to London. All their equipment was carried in six white Range Rovers, six Ford Transit vans and a large, yellow pan-technician truck. They left in small groups with orders to rendezvous at the Army Education Corps barracks in Beaconsfield some 20 miles west of London. By midnight, the teams had successfully travelled the 120 miles when they were then officially authorised to move to Regent's Park Barracks in central London.

**"HE GAVE A DEADLINE OF 24 HOURS, EXPIRING AT NOON THE NEXT DAY, AND THREATENED TO KILL ALL OF THE HOSTAGES IF HIS DEMANDS WERE NOT MET"**

*Above, left: An armoured personnel carrier*

*Above: A total of six terrorists attacked the Embassy, clockwise from top left: Themir Mohammed Hussein, Shakir Abdullah Radhil, Awn Ali Mohammed, Shakir Sultan Said, Makki Hanoun Ali, Fowzi Badavi Nejad*

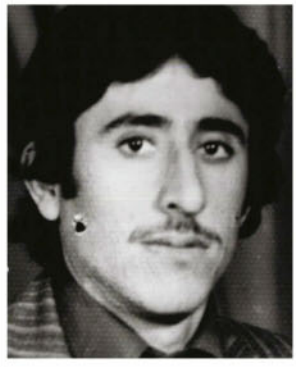
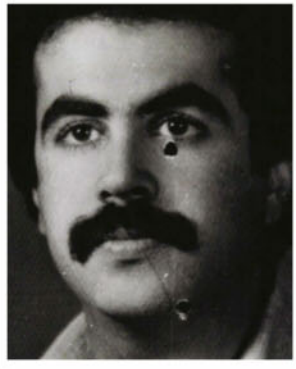
Once officially sanctioned, the mission was then given the code name: NIMROD.

Tension increased on the second day, when Iran refused to consider the terrorists' demands and left all negotiations firmly in the hands of the British authorities. As the noon deadline approached, the police were left hoping for the best, while appeals and promises were made by negotiators in the hope of gaining more time. "The situation was close to panic," said Sim Harris, "as the hostages believed that they were about to die." Faisal, Salim's second in command, was establishing himself as the tough guy. He repeatedly threatened to execute the hostages and was seen to pull and replace the pin of a hand grenade during moments of increased excitement.

While Faisal was establishing his credentials, Abbas Lavasani, the Iranian chargé d'affaires, was setting out his stall as a zealot. Lavasani made it clear that he wanted to be a martyr for his religion. Provocative and difficult, he was only prevented from being shot in the first few days of the siege by the intervention of Mustapha Karkouti.

Chris Cramer began to feign illness as soon as the siege began, with a performance that was so desperate and convincing that he was released. Trevor Lock instructed Cramer to give as much information as possible to the police about the situation inside, including types and numbers of weapons and, most importantly, the number of terrorists.

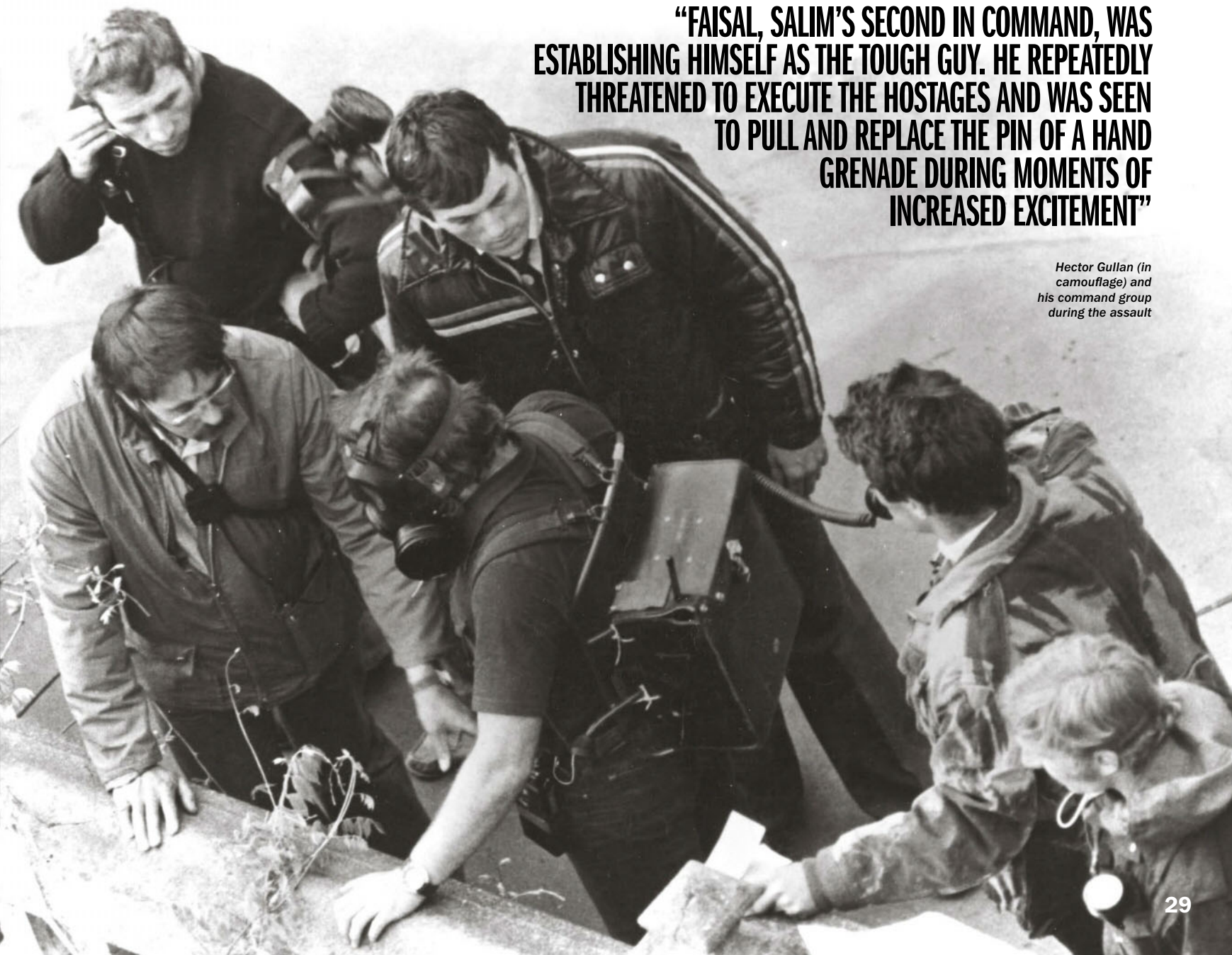
On the evening of day two, SAS troop commanders completed a reconnaissance of the embassy building and established a holding area for the team. The chosen area was only one door away from the embassy at numbers 13-15 Princes Gate – the headquarters of The Royal College of General Practitioners. Major



Police marksman cordon off the Iranian Embassy during the siege

**“FAISAL, SALIM’S SECOND IN COMMAND, WAS ESTABLISHING HIMSELF AS THE TOUGH GUY. HE REPEATEDLY THREATENED TO EXECUTE THE HOSTAGES AND WAS SEEN TO PULL AND REPLACE THE PIN OF A HAND GRENADE DURING MOMENTS OF INCREASED EXCITEMENT”**

*Hector Gullan (in camouflage) and his command group during the assault*



**SAS prepare to abseil onto the rear balcony of the Iranian Embassy**



Hector Gullen, B Squadron's commander, prepared his men to move at midnight hidden in the back of two pan-technician trucks. Between 01:00 and 02:00, B Squadron, with all of their equipment, moved silently into their holding area. The unit claimed 68 men on the ground including support arms.

On day three, all phone lines to the embassy were cut and a field phone was passed to the building. This move meant that Salim could only speak to the trained police negotiators and forced him to request essentials such as food via the police. By controlling his access to the outside world, the negotiators hoped to manipulate Salim.

Intelligence services attempted to place listening devices inside the walls and cavities of the embassy, but squeaky noises from hand-operated drills were heard inside. Trevor Lock persuaded Salim that this noise was caused by mice, but the unconvinced Salim threatened to kill someone if the noise didn't cease. In response to his threat, aircraft approaching Heathrow were directed to fly over Knightsbridge and roadworks with drilling were started nearby. The noise was enough to hide the sounds of the drills, plus the movements of the SAS on the roof, searching for entry points and preparing belays for their abseil ropes.

While the SAS waited, half were on immediate standby, fully dressed except for their gas masks, while the remainder were stripped down to overalls so that they could rest. An 'Immediate Action Plan' had been put in place as soon as the troops were on the ground. If the terrorists started to kill people then six eight-man teams would make an entry and clear their pre-designated areas, hoping to

reduce the casualty list to a minimum. As time passed, information about the construction of the building and intelligence about the terrorists was collated so that a more precise 'Deliberate Action Plan' could be developed.

By day four, the Deliberate Action Plan started to take form. Photos of the terrorists had been obtained from visa applications, Cramer had disclosed his information and the embassy janitor had identified armoured windows and doors. Blueprints of the building were secured from architectural records, which showed the exact layout of every room.

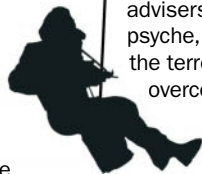
Salim used Trevor Lock, Sim Harris and Mustapha Karkouti as go-betweens and advisers, hoping for insights into the British psyche, while they in turn hoped to persuade the terrorists to give up. Under his heavy overcoat, Lock still had his .38 Smith and Wesson revolver with six rounds. Salim believed that all British police officers

were unarmed, so Lock had only received a rudimentary search during the takeover. The weapon weighed heavily on Lock's mind as threats were repeatedly made to "kill a hostage".

Mustapha tried to convince Salim that surrender now would be a victory – no one had been injured and their cause had been brought to the world's attention. Mustapha suggested asking for a radio announcement by the BBC. Salim still hoped for the intervention of Arab ambassadors but relented and asked the negotiators to make the suggested announcement. The negotiators used this moment to barter for the release of one hostage – Salim agreed and chose Mustapha.

An announcement was made at 9pm on the BBC World Service. Mustapha was released and the terrorists were ecstatic. It seemed at this moment that the siege would end peacefully – the tension subsided and hopes were high. The departure of Mustapha, however, had taken an intelligent, mature and steady man who spoke Arabic out of the equation. When Faisal scribbled "Down with Khomeni" on a wall, no one with enough influence was there to stop Lavasani from overreacting. He provoked Faisal and brought the tension back to a fever pitch. Salim returned to his demands for an ambassador in the belief that Sami, his handler, had told him the truth. Sadly, Salim's whole team had been set up by Iraqi intelligence. No agreements had been made and, even in the unlikely event that they had, they were denied. This created an impasse – there were no ambassadors and Salim thought the police were lying to him.

On Monday 5 May, at 11:00, Faisal took Lavasani down to the ground floor, away from the other hostages. He tied his hands and blindfolded him, then forced him to kneel. Outside the



**“SALIM BELIEVED THAT ALL BRITISH POLICE OFFICERS WERE UNARMED, SO LOCK HAD ONLY RECEIVED A RUDIMENTARY SEARCH DURING THE TAKEOVER. THE WEAPON WEIGHED HEAVILY ON LOCK'S MIND AS THREATS WERE REPEATEDLY MADE TO 'KILL A HOSTAGE'”**



## THE PAGODA TEAM

At the time of the embassy siege, the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment was based at Bradbury Lines, Hereford. 'The Regiment' consisted of four regular Sabre Squadrons – A, B, D and G – all identical in makeup with a full complement of 70 men, including signallers and support staff. The squadrons rotated every six months, becoming the Pagoda team once every two years. At the start of April 1980, it was once again the turn of B Squadron, with most of the men were on their second or third Pagoda tour.

Training for the Pagoda team consisted of continuous practice assaults on buildings, aircraft, trains, ships in harbour and moving vehicles. The whole team were trained as assault troops, but half were also trained as snipers.

Standard **NBC GAS SUIT** with hood and a standard pair of black, cotton overalls

**RADIO COMMUNICATIONS** with a throat microphone

**KNIFE** for cutting away obstacles

**BODY ARMOUR** capable of stopping low velocity projectiles

Suede **OVER JACKET** with pouches for munitions

**BROWNING 9MM AUTOMATIC PISTOLS** with one (extended) 20 and two 13-round magazines

**SR6 Gas Mask**

**HECKLER AND KOCH 9MM MP5** automatic sub machine pistol with three thirty round magazines strapped by a quick release harness across the chest

**LEATHER BELT** with low-slung pistol holster and MP5 magazine pouches

### IN ADDITION TO THIS EQUIPMENT THE SNIPERS HAD:

- ✦ One 7.62mm L42 sniper rifle with an X3 scope
- ✦ One .225 Tikka Finlander hunting rifle with a X10 day scope
- ✦ One .225 Tikka Finlander hunting rifle with an image intensification night scope
- ✦ Camouflage suits

### AMMUNITION CARRIED BY THE ASSAULT TEAM MEMBERS INCLUDED:

- ✦ 46 X 9mm pistol rounds
- ✦ 90 X 9mm machine pistol rounds
- ✦ 'Flash Bang' stun grenades that banged, whistled, flashed and released CS gas


Training took place day and night, five days a week. Repetition and practice were the key words. In a building known as 'the killing house', soldiers took it in turns to sit in chairs surrounded by targets as team members assaulted the room with live ammunition. Men stood in darkened rooms with their shoulders touching targets as comrades wearing gas masks turned, drew their weapons and fired live rounds. With concentrated training and almost unlimited ammunition, the men were expected to hit a four-inch circle in a human head from five metres without aiming. Snipers were able to guarantee a head shot at ranges of up to 200 metres.

**“WITH CONCENTRATED TRAINING AND ALMOST UNLIMITED AMMUNITION, THE MEN WERE EXPECTED TO HIT A FOUR-INCH CIRCLE IN A HUMAN HEAD FROM FIVE METRES WITHOUT AIMING”**



*Entering from the front balcony after the initial explosion to gain entry*





**"I GRIPPED MY M-5 IN BOTH  
HANDS AND THUMBED  
THE SAFETY CATCH,  
ASSURING MYSELF ONCE AGAIN  
THAT IT WAS OFF. THE ONLY SOUNDS  
I COULD HEAR WERE THE STATIC  
HISSING IN MY EARPIECE AND THE  
SOUND OF MY HEART POUNDING IN MY  
EARS. MY GREATEST FEAR NOW WAS  
OF MAKING A MISTAKE THAT MIGHT  
ENDANGER LIFE - ESPECIALLY MINE"**

## OPERATION NIMROD

building, three pistol shots were heard. The SAS stood by once again for an immediate assault, but time passed and no indication was given about what the shots meant.

It was possible that a hostage had been killed. In preparation, Major Gullen briefed his men on his Deliberate Action Plan. Six teams of eight men would silently approach different entry points on the five floors, from basement to roof. Once in position, they would place specially shaped frame charges on the windows and doors. When all of the groups were ready, the command "GO-GO-GO" would be given and the assault would begin.

The shaped charges would direct most of the explosive effect outwards, removing the entrances and minimising the risk to those inside. The groups would enter the building and clear their allocated areas – the mission was to rescue the hostages. The men were reminded about the laws of self-defence and what constituted a lawful killing. They had to believe that their lives, or the lives of those they were trying to protect, were in danger for the law to support them against charges of murder. The prime minister sent a message in which she said, "I don't want any martyrs." In other words – get it right!

At 06.50, Lavasani's body was unceremoniously thrown out of the front door and quickly recovered by two plain-clothes police officers carrying a stretcher. Lavasani's body had two shots to the head and one to the chest – he had been executed. Salim made another deadline, which he now expected to be taken seriously. He wanted the ambassadors by 07:00 or he would kill another hostage.

Home Secretary William Whitelaw instructed Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Neivens to give written authority to the army to take control. When this note was signed at 07:07, it legally sanctioned military action and a building assault by the SAS.

The negotiators played for time, telling Salim the ambassadors were on route and that they would all be driven to Heathrow as soon as the ambassadors arrived. Salim was suspicious, but he hesitated long enough for the SAS to get into position. At 07:23, Salim was on the phone to the senior police negotiator Detective Chief Inspector Max Vernon, who said that as he saw the SAS approach the building he heard a voice in his head singing, "You're going to die, you're going to die," over and over and over.

At the rear of the building, the SAS team slid over the edge of the roof and began to abseil down towards the first floor balcony. Around them, other teams approached the back door, the top floor fire exits and the basement doors, while a final group was approaching the front windows – all in full view of a hundred live television cameras.

"I crept quietly out of the back door of the college and across the concrete

patio towards the rear door of the embassy. I looked ahead of me at Robert as he began to insert detonators into the explosives and place them on the back door.

"Then I looked up. Above me, four men began to descend slowly from the roof on their abseil ropes. Behind me, Big Bob was wielding an eight-pound sledgehammer as back up, should it be needed to get through the door.

"I gripped my M-5 in both hands and thumbed the safety catch, assuring myself once again that it was off. The only sounds I could hear were the static hissing in my earpiece and the sound of my heart pounding in my ears. My greatest fear now was of making a mistake that might endanger life – especially mine. My mind raced. Watch the windows, Robin. What do I do if someone looks out now? Don't rush. Is my pistol still in my holster? Where is my partner?

"The police dogs, which were being held back just inside the doors of the college, began to feel the tension in their handlers and started barking and howling. 'Why don't you shut the bastard dogs up?' I thought. The fear that for so long had been my greatest enemy welled up inside me like a balloon, waiting to escape from my throat. Hello, I thought, I'm glad you're here. Without you, I wouldn't be functioning at my best. I needed to be scared to be alert."

At the rear of the building, an unexpected mistake occurred when one of the abseillers put his foot through a glass window. Salim heard the noise and left the telephone to investigate. Major Gullen, realising the game was up, gave the "GO-GO-GO" early. Troops exploded their frame charges, destroying the windows and doors. The team on the ground floor hadn't



**"BEHIND ME, BIG BOB WAS WIELDING AN EIGHT-POUND SLEDGEHAMMER AS BACK UP, SHOULD IT BE NEEDED TO GET THROUGH THE DOOR"**

BBC sound man Sim Harris leaps from the front balcony to escape the flames



finished laying their charges and smashed the door in with a sledgehammer. Flash bangs were thrown inside closely followed by the troops.

Inside, on the first floor, Trevor Lock grabbed Salim and drew his pistol. He later recalled the surprise in Salim's eyes when he saw the gun that Lock had kept hidden for six days. The door burst open and Lock heard a voice telling him to move away. In seconds, Salim was dead.

On the first floor balcony, an abseiler was trapped on his rope above the balcony window.

"I looked up as three bullet holes appeared in the window above my head. Dangling on his rope, about 12 feet above the balcony and 20 feet from the ground, was one of the assault team. He was stuck. His rope jammed in the figure-of-eight abseil device attached to his harness. The curtains beneath him had been set on fire by the grenades that had exploded when the first group had entered. The flames were climbing higher and higher and were now lapping against his legs. His screams of pain sounded over the radio."

Beneath him, Sergeant Tommy Palmer had thrown his flashbang inside and entered the building. The flames set his head and gas mask alight and he was forced momentarily to retreat, but only long enough for him to discard the mask and enter the gas-filled building unprotected. He quickly identified two terrorists in the Telex room who had just shot and killed Ali Akbar Samadzadeh and wounded Ahmad Dadgar. Palmer identified a grenade and promptly killed them.

After entering from the front balcony, John McAleese and his group discovered two armed terrorists. John's description of the event was simple and concise: "Bang, bang, job done."

## **"WITHOUT HESITATION I FIRED ONE SHORT BURST OF FOUR ROUNDS AT HIS CHEST. TWO OTHER TEAM MEMBERS ALSO OPENED FIRE SIMULTANEOUSLY. FAISAL SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR WITH 27 HOLES IN HIM"**

Only two terrorists remained alive. On the stairs leading down to the ground floor, the hostages were passed hand-to-hand towards the rear doors. Once on the grass at the rear of the building, they were all forced to the ground and handcuffed. This action controlled all the frightened participants and kept them safe from further harm.

Back inside, on the stairs, there was a scuffle – a voice shouted "Grenade!" – Faisal had placed himself among the hostages; as he reached the ground floor three men opened fire.

"Without hesitation I fired one short burst of four rounds at his chest. Two other team members also opened fire simultaneously. Faisal slumped to the floor with 27 holes in him. He didn't spasm or spurt blood everywhere. He simply crumpled up like a bundle of rags and died."

The grenade that he had previously used to threaten the hostages rolled from his dead hand. The pin was still inserted. The building burned fiercely as the last hostage departed

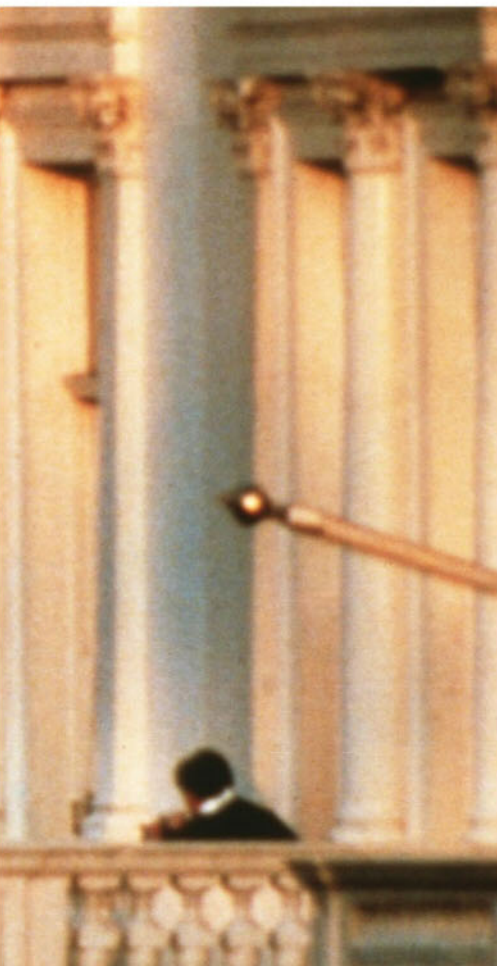
and the remaining soldiers moved outside to assist at the hostage holding area. Handcuffed on the grass, Sim Harris nodded his head vigorously to his left to tell the soldiers that the man lying beside him was Fawzi Najad, the surviving terrorist. Najad was lifted up and moved away towards the building and placed a safe distance from the others.

Eleven minutes had passed from initiation to completion. During that time, two SAS soldiers were injured, one hostage was murdered, two were wounded by the terrorists and a further 17 hostages were rescued in good health. Five terrorists were lawfully killed by the SAS and one was captured.

The team quickly handed the situation over to the police and returned to their holding area to reorganise their equipment. A short time later the home secretary arrived to give his thanks. He was in tears and said, "I knew it would be good, but I never thought it would be this good." Whitelaw had been given an estimate of up to 20 per cent casualties by SAS Brigadier Peter de la Billière. One dead hostage was terribly sad, but it was a lot better than five. William Whitelaw wanted to parade the troops to the press, but he was politely informed by Major Gullen that they wished to remain anonymous.

While the world sat back in wild admiration, the SAS stacked their gear and crept into the back of their civilian trucks to withdraw to Regent's Park Barracks. There they would recover their vehicles and return quickly to Hereford. They were still on call and needed to be ready – another attack could be waiting to happen anywhere, anytime.

At 21:00, while they stacked their kit in their vehicles, it was announced that the prime



**Troops landing on the rear balcony to make their entry into the embassy**

minister would be visiting to congratulate “her boys”. She arrived, accompanied by her husband Denis, and personally thanked each man. She then joined them to watch a replay of the assault on the BBC News at 10. A famous anecdote still resounds in the bars of Hereford about this moment, when legendary Scotsman John McAleese said to the prime minister, “Hey hun, get yer f\*\*king head out o the wee. I canna see the telly.” Some cringed, some laughed, but Maggie simply apologised and moved aside.

The team returned slowly in dribs and drabs to Hereford. One team arrived late following a puncture that drove them into the sanctuary of the Heston Service Station on the M4 motorway. Unfortunately, the tools to change their wheel were hidden beneath all their guns and equipment.

“As we were trying to work out what to do, I saw an AA van parked about 50 yards away. ‘I know, I’ll get the AA to change it.’ I said. Before anyone could protest, I strolled over and asked the AA driver if he had heard about what had happened in London that day. He said that he had, becoming quite animated about the events. ‘Well I’m one of the blokes who did it,’ I told him, ‘and I have a problem.’ I explained our predicament to him and, not sure whether to believe me or not, he drove over to take a look, probably as much out of curiosity as anything else. Confronted by four tired-looking heavies, and with the signal from our police radio bleeping in the front of the vehicle, he was convinced and changed the wheel for us.”

A week later, B Squadron received an engraved plaque from the Commander US

Special Forces, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The plaque read: “To the brave British commandos who assaulted the Iranian Embassy in London on 5 May 1980. It just goes to show you can’t make chicken salad out of chicken shit.”

The assault on the Iranian Embassy was a lift for the moral of the free world. A classic special-forces operation. The foresight of the British Government to finance and support the Pagoda team was exceptional. The strong leadership and determination of Margaret Thatcher’s government ensured that the terrorists would never succeed. However, it was the training and calibre of the men that made it all possible.

Operation Nimrod ended the era of hostage taking in the UK for the next 20 years and, as the SAS taught their skills elsewhere, they gave the same deterrent to other countries. The combination of best man, best management and adequate financial commitment made them the envy of the world. The SAS maintained their silence for 22 years until, in 2002, the BBC persuaded three of them to reveal the truth about those six days, in Louise Norman’s documentary, *SAS: Iranian Embassy Siege*.

The trauma of the events dramatically affected most of the hostages and negotiators. None of the SAS men, however, were psychologically injured by the events on that day. The surviving team members know that they still hold a special place in British history and are proud that they saved so many lives.

Fawzi Najad was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and was released after serving 27 years. He now lives peacefully as a mini-cab driver in south London.

**“OPERATION NIMROD ENDED THE ERA OF OF HOSTAGE TAKING IN THE UK FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS AND AS THE SAS TAUGHT THEIR SKILLS ELSEWHERE, THEY GAVE THE SAME DETERRENT TO OTHER COUNTRIES”**

*Left: PC Trevor Lock holds a press conference at Scotland Yard after the end of the siege*



*SAS secure the hostages on the lawn to the rear of the Iranian Embassy. One of the terrorists would be found in their number*



**IN MEMORY OF ASSAULT TEAM MEMBERS SINCE DEPARTED:**

- ✦ Staff Sergeant John McAleese QGM
- ✦ Sergeant Thomas Palmer QGM
- ✦ Sergeant David Playford
- ✦ Sergeant Keith Johnson
- ✦ Captain Frank Collins
- ✦ Sgt Dom Pavlov



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through a binocular  
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# SIEGE OF WARSAW

WORDS DAVID SMITH

When Germany launched its invasion of Poland, few expected the capital city to fall in less than a month

## OPPOSING FORCES



### POLAND

**LEADER:**  
Edward Rydz-Smigly  
**INFANTRY:**  
140,000  
**TANKS:**  
c. 40  
**PLANES:**  
54  
**ARTILLERY:**  
c. 64



### GERMANY

**LEADERS:**  
Fedor von Bock,  
Gerd von Rundstedt  
**INFANTRY:**  
175,000  
**TANKS:**  
c. 200  
**PLANES:**  
1,200  
**ARTILLERY:**  
1,000



## POLAND 1 - 27 SEPTEMBER 1939

In the early hours of 1 September 1939, the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein fired the first shot of World War II. The German campaign plan, *Fall Weiss* (Case White) swung into action and the world was introduced to a new form of warfare that would later be recalled as '*blitzkrieg*' (lightning war).

Although debate continues over how meaningful the term is, and how deeply rooted in German planning it was, there can be no doubt that speed was the defining characteristic of the invasion of Poland. On the seventh day of the campaign, German tanks were approaching the outskirts of Warsaw and the stage had been set for a brief yet brutal siege.

The seeds of World War II had been planted at the end of the Great War, with Germany particularly aggrieved by territorial losses to Poland, including the 'Pomeranian corridor', which split East Prussia from the rest of Germany, and the designation of the port of Danzig as a free city.

By 1939, Poland was counting on protection from France and Great Britain as Germany made increasingly bellicose attempts to regain its territory. An initiative to pull the Soviet Union into an anti-German alliance failed due to Polish misgivings over Russian intent and on 25 August 1939, the stunning Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact placed Poland between two rapacious and suddenly cooperative powers.

### The invasion force

In 1939 German Army was not quite the smooth-running machine it is usually characterised as being. As war approached only a fraction of the army had been mechanised and the bulk of it still relied on horses, bicycles and its own feet.

By concentrating all of its mechanised and motorised divisions on Poland, however, Germany was able to create massive local superiority. An advantage in tanks of 2,511 to 615 would no doubt have proved decisive enough, but the German campaign plan allowed them to enjoy a better than eight-to-one advantage at the points of attack.

The tanks involved were not the powerful behemoths of the later war years. Tanks were utilised in an anti-infantry role and the majority were Panzerkampfwagen types I and II, armed with machine guns or 20mm cannon respectively. There were less than 100 of the more powerful PzKpfw III, armed with a 37mm gun, while the 75mm-equipped PzKpfw IV was used as a fire support platform.

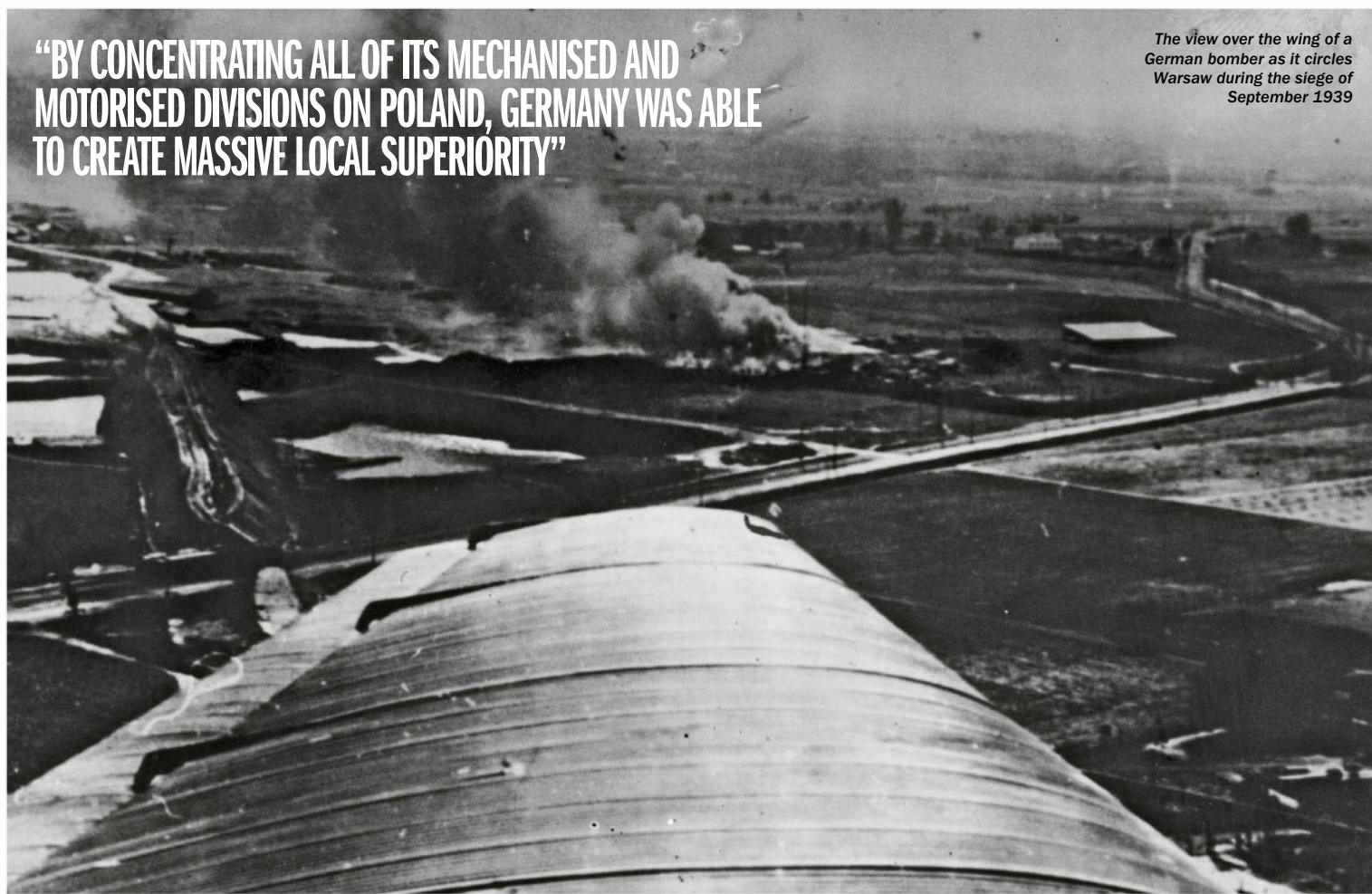
The Germans also enjoyed a significant advantage in artillery, with 5,805 guns to 2,065 for the Poles.

What differentiated the German use of armour was its massing in panzer divisions (combined arms units with tanks as well as motorised artillery and infantry). The use of high-quality radios was of critical importance, as it allowed for a great flexibility in movement and rapid responses to problems.

The Germans also enjoyed an advantage in manpower of at least 1.5:1, although in reality it was greater as Polish mobilisation was never really completed.

**"BY CONCENTRATING ALL OF ITS MECHANISED AND MOTORISED DIVISIONS ON POLAND, GERMANY WAS ABLE TO CREATE MASSIVE LOCAL SUPERIORITY"**

*The view over the wing of a German bomber as it circles Warsaw during the siege of September 1939*



### The birth of 'blitzkrieg'?

Germany wanted, and needed, a quick victory. With Britain and France declaring their support for Poland, the campaign would need to be fought and won before the western powers could react. German divisions could then be rushed westwards to face an anticipated French offensive.

Polish planning for the campaign took this into account. Believing they needed only to buy enough time for the French to mobilise and launch a massive offensive against Germany, their entire strategy was flawed from the start. Compounding this flaw was the fact that France believed Poland would be able to hold out for at least three months.

The Poles therefore called for an initial defence of their western territory, followed by a planned withdrawal to defensive positions along the Vistula River. Such a defence would not only signal that Poland was willing to fight (and therefore worthy of its promised support from France and Britain), but also give time for mobilisation of its forces to be completed.

The German plan threw all of this into confusion. Whether or not there was a coherent acceptance of the concept of *blitzkrieg* (the term itself was almost certainly coined by a journalist, not a general), German commanders accepted the need to move quickly. This paramount objective would overwhelm Polish resistance in a matter of weeks.

### Invasion

German forces aimed to converge on Warsaw from two directions. From the north, Army Group North, under Fedor von Bock, marched with

## "AIR DEFENCE QUICKLY BECAME LIMITED TO ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AS THE PAF WAS DRIVEN FROM THE SKIES. THE STAGE WAS SET FOR THE SINISTER STUKA DIVE-BOMBER TO WRITE ITSELF INTO HISTORY"

15 divisions. From the south-west came Army Group South, 26 divisions strong, under Gerd von Rundstedt. With 630,000 and 886,000 men respectively, the two army groups significantly outnumbered the Polish defenders.

Warsaw was a target from day one. The Luftwaffe was tasked with bombing the city, but weather conditions on 1 September were far from ideal and the spirited defence of the Brygada Poscigowa, the 'Pursuit Brigade', took the German airmen by surprise. The majority of Poland's squadrons had been allocated to support its various field armies, but the 54 planes of the Pursuit Brigade, mostly obsolete PZL P.11 fighters, downed 16 Luftwaffe aircraft on the first day of the war.

Losses in the Polish Air Force were catastrophic, however, and against the vastly superior Messerschmitt Bf 109 and the newly introduced Bf 110, as well as defensive fire from bombers, the PAF was to lose around 85 per cent of its aircraft during the short war.

German propaganda insisted that the Polish planes had been destroyed on the ground in the first two days of the fighting, but in fact the Poles had wisely scattered their aircraft and only unserviceable wrecks had been caught on the ground at their main airfields. Nevertheless, air defence quickly became limited to anti-aircraft guns as the PAF was driven from the

skies. The stage was set for the sinister Stuka dive-bomber to write itself into history.

Relatively slow (it would perform disastrously in the later Battle of Britain against Hurricanes and Spitfires), the 340 Stukas of the Luftwaffe revelled in the open skies above Poland, attacking lines of communication, trains, railway lines and other key tactical targets at will and becoming in many ways the symbol of blitzkrieg.

The German plan was not running as smoothly as their propaganda claimed, however. Coordination between the panzer and infantry divisions was patchy and the Poles were enjoying success with their 37mm anti-tank weapons, even employing obsolescent armoured trains effectively.

Polish cavalry was still useful due to its rapidity of movement, but it was never used in full-scale charges against panzers, as German propaganda claimed (a successful charge was mounted against an infantry unit, but was then repelled by advancing German tanks).

### Warsaw under attack

Following the confusion of the early days of the war, the Germans began to make serious advances. Most worrying for the defending Poles was that they were unable to retreat as quickly as the Germans were advancing. Pressure on two Polish armies, Army Lodz and Army Prusy, resulted in a gap developing between them, wide enough for the Germans to race through. By the afternoon of 7 September, elements of 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions had reached Warsaw.

By now, Luftwaffe raids were having more of an effect, and the rubble of destroyed buildings dotted the landscape. Distressing though this was for the civilian population, it actually helped with the preparation of defences – the bombed-out buildings provided excellent cover for the placement of anti-tank guns and artillery pieces.

In addition to this, ditches were dug, rail lines ripped up and planted into the ground to form rudimentary tank traps, and barricades built. Tram cars were toppled over to block roads.

On 8 September, as the defenders waited, the rumbling sound of advancing tanks began to build as the first units of 4th Panzer Division advanced cautiously into a hostile and unfamiliar environment. The tanks, mostly Type I and II panzers, were thinly armoured and unable to withstand anything more substantial than machine-gun fire. The 37mm and 75mm shells fired at them, often at point-blank range from behind the improvised defensive works on the streets of Warsaw, easily tore through the thin armour. Many of 4th Panzer Division's tanks were destroyed in this way before the attack was called off.

The Poles had served notice that they would not give up their city without a fight, but how determined that fight would be was up for debate.

The evening before, the Polish commander, Edward Rydz-Smigly (who had defended Warsaw



**Above:** German infantry advance into the outskirts of Warsaw, using a tank for cover

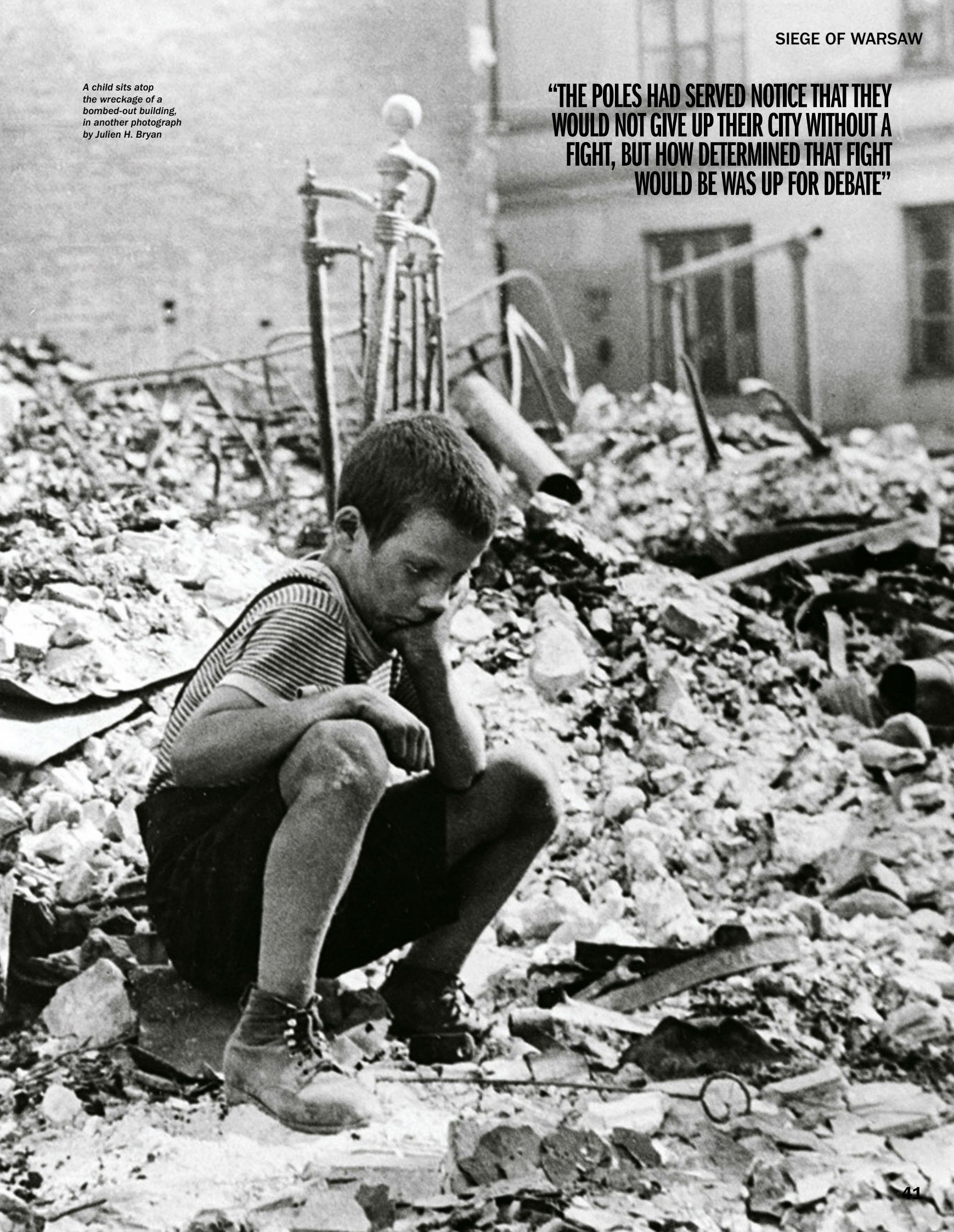


**Left:** Luftwaffe raids destroyed or damaged many buildings throughout the city



*A child sits atop  
the wreckage of a  
bombed-out building,  
in another photograph  
by Julien H. Bryan*

**“THE POLES HAD SERVED NOTICE THAT THEY  
WOULD NOT GIVE UP THEIR CITY WITHOUT A  
FIGHT, BUT HOW DETERMINED THAT FIGHT  
WOULD BE WAS UP FOR DEBATE”**



from the Bolsheviks in 1920), had taken a fateful decision. Convinced that Warsaw was about to be surrounded by the rapidly advancing Germans, he ordered the bulk of the army command apparatus to relocate to Brzesc-nad-Bugiem (Brest-Litovsk). At the worst possible moment, with its armies reeling under the German onslaught, the Polish command structure disintegrated.

The tanks of 4th Panzer Division attacked again on 9 September, but were again repulsed. Polish defences had been strengthened overnight and the 'Children of Warsaw Brigade' had been recalled to the city, launching a series of small night-time raids to keep the Germans off balance.

### The Polish counterattack

One area in which blitzkrieg left the Germans vulnerable was in their susceptibility to counter-attacks on their exposed flanks. As their divisions raced along as fast as they could, it was inevitable that some would become strung out, and with their focus on what was immediately in front of them, a force on their flanks might be overlooked.

Just such a situation had arisen with Army Poznan. Bypassed by the advancing German armies as they had streamed past to the north and south, its commander, Tadeusz Kutrzeba, had begged for permission to hurl his fresh troops against the flank of the advancing divisions. Repeatedly, Rydz-Smigly had refused but now, with the situation becoming desperate, he finally acquiesced.

The German Eighth Army was the target, blissfully unaware of the danger as intelligence had mistakenly reported Army Poznan retreating to Warsaw. As evening approached on 9 September, three Polish infantry divisions, flanked by two cavalry brigades, attacked two German infantry divisions along the Bzura River. After 24 hours of fighting, the Germans were forced to withdraw and around 1,500 men were taken prisoner.

It was a small victory, but it achieved its primary goal – that of buying time for the defences of Warsaw to be strengthened and for more units to make it safely back to the city. Epitomising this was the recall of 1st and 4th Panzer Divisions from Warsaw to join in an encircling movement on Army Poznan.

The good news for Warsaw was, of course, bad news for Army Poznan, which was quickly surrounded. Kutrzeba had hopes of fighting his way through to the east, which would have allowed the army to reach Warsaw, but instead was forced to turn northwards in the face of overwhelming enemy forces.

*A PZL P.11 fighter in the colours of the Polish 'Pursuit Brigade', which defended Warsaw during the 1939 invasion*



# SIEGE OF WARSAW



**04 THE NORTHERN APPROACH**  
By 15 September the Germans are back, this time approaching the city from the north, along both banks of the Vistula River. The suburb of Praga, on the east bank, is the focus of the assault.

**06 BLACK MONDAY**  
The city is surrounded by 12 German divisions. On 25 September a huge artillery bombardment, along with bombing raids by 1,200 Luftwaffe planes, rocks the city.

**05 THE FLIGHT OF ARMY POZNAN**  
Having staged a brave but doomed counter-attack, the remnants of Army Poznan fights its way into Warsaw. The attack has bought precious days for the organisation of defences in the city, but the situation is increasingly desperate.



**08 THE FINAL SURRENDER**

With Hitler ordering that no civilians are to be allowed to leave the city, Polish commanders recognise the pointlessness of further resistance. On the evening of 26 September talks open with the Germans and the city surrenders the following day.

**07 FALL OF THE FORTS**

A string of obsolescent forts to the south of the city, which offer more comfort to the civilian population than concern for the Germans, are overwhelmed by infantry assaults on 26 September. The southern route into Warsaw lies open.

**FORT CZERIAKOWSKI****FORT DABROWSKI****FORT MOKOTOWSKI****02 THE POLISH COMMAND WITHDRAWS**

Fearing that an encirclement of Warsaw is inevitable, Polish commander Eduard Rydz-Smigly orders the removal of the Polish command headquarters, sparking a temporary panic in the city.

**03 THE PANZERS ARRIVE**

On 7 September, German tanks arrive on the southwestern outskirts of the city. The following day they push into the suburbs at Ochota, but are repulsed by anti-tank and artillery fire. The panzers are then withdrawn to help deal with a Polish counter-attack.

**01 THE LUFTWAFFE STRIKES**

On the first day of the war, the Luftwaffe bombs Warsaw, but determined defence from the two squadrons of the Polish 'Pursuit Brigade' (which shot down 42 German planes in the first six days of the war), along with bad weather, limits the effectiveness of these initial air raids.

**FORT SZCZESLIWICKI**



One of the formidable forts that guarded the southern approach to Warsaw falls into German hands

Right: A Polish soldier looks at a poster urging the citizens of Warsaw to resist the German invasion in a photograph taken by Julien H. Bryan



### The siege of Warsaw

The Polish plan was still to hang on until help arrived from France, so keeping field armies intact was of paramount importance. On the same day that Rydz-Smigly had shifted the Polish command centre from Warsaw, he had issued an ominous order – men within a certain age range were also to leave the city.

The inevitable conclusion was that Warsaw was being left to its fate, with manpower shifted further eastwards, out of reach of the advancing Germans. The order was so frightening, in fact, that it was ignored, with the general in charge of the defence of Warsaw, Walerian Czuma, agreeing with the mayor, Stefan Starzynski, that the men were needed to defend the city.

For the population, it was a terrifying time. There was no doubt that the war was going badly, even disastrously. Alexander Polonius, trapped in the suburbs of the city as the noose tightened, told later of the hopelessness experienced in the face of German military superiority: "At the beginning of the war," he noted, on 8 September, "we were always trying to distinguish the colours and markings of the planes to see which were the enemy; but now few even took the trouble: whatever aeroplanes were heard we took it for granted that they were German."

On the same day, Rydz-Smigly had issued an order that resistance was to continue. Posters appeared throughout the city, urging the citizens to arms (*Do Broni*) and declaring that it would be defended to the last man. Retreating units were finding their way into the city and there was little doubt that events were reaching their critical point.

The city was not yet surrounded, however. German forces were closing in from the north, but to the west, the Bzura counter-attack was

On 16 September the Luftwaffe sent 820 planes against the trapped Poles in the 'Bzura pocket', who were also being pummelled by artillery fire, while panzer forces closed in. The end was inevitable, and although some units did manage to break through a weak spot in the German cordon, Army Poznan was virtually annihilated. A staggering 120,000 men were taken prisoner.

It had been a brave diversion, but the inferior communications systems of the Poles had proved to be a major handicap. It had also only held up the German advance from one direction. Out of the north came the two armies of Army Group North, closing in once more on the ultimate goal of Warsaw.

### The city

Warsaw was a city of 1.3 million inhabitants, including the largest Jewish population outside New York – 350,000 Jews called Warsaw home, and most were to suffer a horrendous fate in the years that followed the German capture of the city.

Ironically, the belief that France would quickly launch an offensive on the opening of the war had not only misled the Poles, it had also hampered German planning. Unwilling to have its forces committed too far to the east in case they needed to respond quickly to a French attack, German commanders had been tentative about crossing the Vistula River. By the middle of September, reality was dawning

– the French were not about to move quickly and the armies engaged in Poland were free to roam at will. Bock's Army Group North was therefore able to move southwards on both sides of the Vistula, posing a much more serious threat to the Polish defensive positions. Third Army was in the vanguard as German units again pushed down towards Warsaw.

In the beleaguered city at the time was an American journalist, Julien H. Bryan, who remained to document the assault. Armed with a still camera and a Bell & Howell cine camera, he captured images of the city under the hammer of the German war machine. In particular, the incessant air attacks had become a monotonous terror. "By the 12th day," Bryan reported in his documentary film 'Siege', "it was absurd even to sound alarms, for there was always an air raid." Bryan's film, smuggled out after the city fell, gave a glimpse of the work undertaken to construct defences and the devastating effects of German incendiary bombs, which turned whole blocks into infernos.

**"350,000 JEWS CALLED WARSAW HOME, AND MOST WERE TO SUFFER A HORRENDOUS FATE IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED THE GERMAN CAPTURE OF THE CITY"**



German troops parade triumphantly through the streets of Warsaw after capturing the city

## FURTHER READING

- ✦ POLAND 1939: THE BIRTH OF BLITZKRIEG BY STEVEN J. ZALOGA
- ✦ NO GREATER ALLY: THE UNTOLD STORY OF POLAND'S FORCES IN WORLD WAR II BY KENNETH K. KOSKODAN
- ✦ I SAW THE SIEGE OF WARSAW BY ALEXANDER POLONIUS

still tying up Rundstedt's armies. To the south, there was hope in the form of four fortifications, Forts Szczesliwicki, Mokotowski, Dabrowski and Czerniakowski. The forts were old, though, and Mokotowski had been partially dismantled in preparation for being converted to a storage facility. They were a comforting presence for the civilian population, but they could not hope to hold back modern German forces for long.

Keeping the civilian population under control was becoming increasingly difficult as the nightmarish reality of a siege began to sink in. Polonius wrote of bakeries being broken into by hungry mobs, while Bryan, the American journalist stuck in the city, filmed the bodies of women machine-gunned by German planes while foraging for potatoes. "Sleeping is a peace-time prejudice," Polonius wrote in his diary on 10 September. "I spent the night in hearing the stunning din of heavy vehicles on the road, as the rows of lorries and armoured cars passed through the village." Later he would write of the terror as his house was bombed and strafed.

By 19 September, the city was flooded with refugees, begging in the streets and being directed to aid stations which were, in Polonius's words, "sheer mockery. There is invariably an enormous queue, but no food or drink." The stench of rotting corpses began to fill the air.

### The fall

Fittingly enough, in what Polonius described as "this speediest of all wars", the end for Warsaw came quickly. As the Bzura counter-attack fizzled out, German forces completed the encirclement of the city by 21 September, committing 12 divisions to the task.

The short, sharp lessons learned by the panzer forces in the earlier street fighting, had helped

## "WARSAW DISAPPEARED UNDER A PALL OF SMOKE, WHICH ACTUALLY MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR LUFTWAFFE PLANES TO SPOT THEIR TARGETS, RESULTING IN NUMEROUS 'FRIENDLY FIRE' CASUALTIES"

persuade the German command that the capture of the city would be best left in the hands of the artillery and Luftwaffe. A thousand guns were amassed around Warsaw to pummel the city, while the air force continued its air raids.

On 23 September, a major assault was beaten back by the desperate Polish defenders, but two days later resistance appeared futile in the face of a huge artillery bombardment, accompanied by bombing raids featuring 1,200 planes. Warsaw disappeared under a pall of smoke, which actually made it difficult for Luftwaffe planes to spot their targets, resulting in numerous 'friendly fire' casualties among German ground units.

The forts to the south of the city fell the next day, after determined infantry assaults. Fort Mokotowski, home to the Polish Broadcasting Station, had kept transmitting up to the 25th despite being repeatedly targeted from above by German bombers.

Resistance was still an option, as fresh reserves of ammunition had been transported into the city via locomotive, but the cost was becoming too high.

"I feel that I am growing abnormal," Polonius wrote as the siege neared its inevitable conclusion. "When the guns are firing I feel quite assured and light of heart, but I am afraid of the silence." Polish troops had arrived at his house on the 26th, setting up a new defensive perimeter as the Germans closed in, but the following day the soldiers were just as suddenly withdrawn. The city had surrendered.

### The aftermath

As many as 40,000 civilians had died during the savage siege of Warsaw. Following its capture, the Jewish population was to suffer most at the hands of the German occupiers, first forced to live in a cramped ghetto (where an estimated 83,000 would die of disease and starvation) and later transported to death camps for more organised extermination.

Warsaw's capture had never been in doubt from the moment it was fixed as the target of the German offensive, and events elsewhere had ensured a similar fate for the entire country.

The Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, signed just before the opening of the war, had called for the partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. As Poland hung grimly on, waiting for the promised assistance from its allies in the west, Russian forces massed along its eastern border.

This army was far inferior to the one that had rolled over Poland's western borders just a few weeks earlier. The Soviet army was badly led and organised, but it did not need to do much more than occupy the territory allotted to it under the secret terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact – Poland had shifted almost all its forces to the west to face the Germans. The two great armies, unaware that they would shortly be pitted against each other, calmly divided Poland between themselves.

The cost of defeat for Warsaw was immense. At the end of the war, when Soviet forces 'liberated' the city, they would find a population of just 174,000.

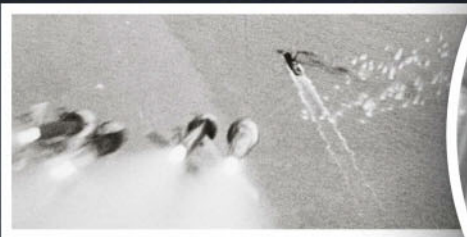
# FRIENDLY — FIRE — OFF NORMANDY

WORDS TOM GARNER

WWII naval veteran Claude Sealey reveals a deadly encounter with his own countrymen in a notorious but little known incident off northern France



*Below: In this image the shell splashes from the aircraft's four 20mm cannons assist the pilot in correcting his aim before unleashing a salvo of RPs*



*Below: A salvo of 60-lb rocket projectiles fired from a Typhoon towards a German railway siding, 30 March 1945. Sealey would have been under attack aboard HMS Jason from the same aircraft and weapons*



*Claude Sealey was wounded during the RAF attack on the 1st Minesweeping Flotilla on 27 August 1944*

**I**t is a beautiful summer's day in August 1944 and six ships of the Royal Navy are sweeping the area near Le Havre for mines. Despite the dangerous task the warm weather is a welcome relief for the recent veterans of the notoriously cold Arctic Convoys. Some are so relaxed that they sunbathe on deck, but a formation of aircraft appears out of the sun and suddenly dives towards the flotilla.

This would be an alarming situation if it were the enemy, but the sailors are more alarmed to see that these are Hawker Typhoons of the Royal Air Force and without warning the fighter-bombers attack their own ships. Explosions erupt everywhere and vessels begin to sink. Many men have to abandon ship but to make matters worse German shore batteries open fire and kill vulnerable sailors in the water. By the time the Typhoons leave two ships have been sunk and hundreds of men are either dead or wounded.

One of the casualties is a young British stoker aboard HMS Jason called Claude Sealey. Although he became covered in shrapnel wounds Sealey survived to recall his horrific experiences at the hands of his allies.

### Powering a minesweeper

Born in 1923 the teenage Sealey was keen to serve in the Royal Navy, "I joined in September 1940 when I was 17 years old. I got a shore job because I was underage and I ran away from home to join up. My sister was at the barracks

gate crying and I was given the choice to either go home or stay but I decided to stay. Of course I wish I hadn't that day when I saw her crying."

When Sealey turned 18 he was transferred to general naval service and introduced to the ship that he would serve on until 1945. "I went in for a stokers course up at Skegness and as soon as I came back down to Portsmouth I was drafted onto the minesweeper HMS Jason at Christmas 1942. The ship was at Leith docks near Edinburgh and I was a lone draft – I was on my own. I got the train from Portsmouth right up to Scotland and picked the ship up. HMS Jason was my only ship for the entire war."

As a stoker, Sealey worked in the bowels of the ship to keep it constantly on the move. He recalls that discipline was strict: "In the boiler room you had a petty officer and me as a stoker. There were six burners and if they signalled from the bridge or engine room that they wanted more speed then you'd put more burners on to create steam. When the sirens alarmed that we were being attacked I was always ordered to check the smoke glass. I had to go up a ladder and right across the back of the boiler to see if it was all clear because we weren't allowed to make smoke. The petty officer would wait at the bottom of the ladder so I couldn't get out – he wasn't a nice man."

Sealey's duties were split between the boiler and engine rooms. "There were two boiler rooms mid-ship and the engine room was in the stern where the turbines were stored that powered the propellers. There was a head and

a stern turbine with a walkway towards port and starboard. At the end was a vat that was used for making fresh, clean water that was mainly for the boilers."

In the engine room Sealey was responsible for an important part of the ship's capabilities. "I liked being in the engine room because an artificer and myself would take the throttles. This meant we were in charge of the ship's speed. The bridge used to signal down how many revs they wanted and we'd open up the steam for the appropriate speed."

Conditions were hazardous in the lower parts of the ship and if it were attacked Sealey would have been in great danger, but he had little time to feel worried. "I felt vulnerable in the boiler room and not so much in the engine room but most of the time I didn't think about it much because we were all busy. We just had to adapt and get on with it."

### Clearing the way on D-Day

Sealey's first active service was on an Arctic Convoy to Russia in August 1943 where he sailed to Polyarny, Murmansk and Archangel as part of the Allied attempt to supply the Soviet Union with arms and equipment. He experienced vicious storms, German U-boat and air attacks as well as witnessing Russian brutality against their own people.

By the time Sealey returned to warmer waters the journey had made him an experienced, if weary, seaman. "On the way down from Scapa Flow there was a U-boat off the Irish coast

*Poor communication caused the RAF bombers to attack Allied ships on that tragic day in August 1944*



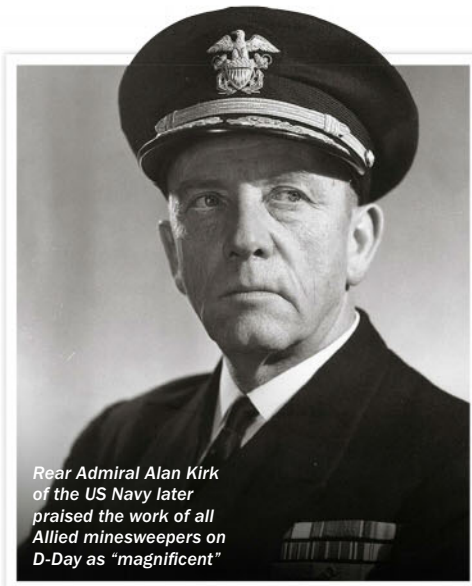
**"THE SAILORS ARE MORE ALARMED TO SEE THAT THESE ARE HAWKER TYPHOONS OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AND WITHOUT WARNING THE FIGHTER-BOMBERS ATTACK THEIR OWN SHIPS"**

because they used to hang about over there. We got the alarm and I remember there was an acting petty officer who went down on his knees and prayed, 'Please, we've got back this far, don't get us now!' Everybody was terrified. Luckily it didn't come to anything and we got back to Portsmouth. After that we did a workout for D-Day."

Sealey was now a leading stoker on HMS Jason and as a minesweeper the ship would be one of the first vessels to sail on 6 June but Sealey almost missed his chance to take part in the event that changed the war: "Just before D-Day you couldn't see the Isle of Wight for ships and we were anchored over there. The skipper gave us leave to be back the next day. There were three of us and we missed the liberty boat to take us back. I was terrified and I rang Portsmouth barracks, reported to the officer on the watch immediately and he gave me a letter so we didn't miss the next day because that was the start of D-Day."

On 6 June 1944, HMS Jason sailed from England as part of 1<sup>st</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla (1<sup>st</sup> MSF). The minesweepers' responsibility was to lead the assault forces onto the Normandy beaches and clear the German minefield that protected the area. Officially codenamed 'Operation Neptune', the work of the minesweepers was an essential part of the beach landing process. German minefields were laid in depth within ten miles of the French coastline and the flotilla had to sweep ten 'channels' to the beach assault areas for the troops to get through.

HMS Jason was one of 350 different vessels to participate in the mine-clearing operation and her orders were to clear 'Channel 9' of the approach route to Sword Beach for Allied troops to land. Consequently, the minesweeping flotillas led the way for the assault forces as



Rear Admiral Alan Kirk of the US Navy later praised the work of all Allied minesweepers on D-Day as "magnificent"

Sealey recalls: "We took off on 6 June, more or less as dawn was breaking and we swept the mines. There were a lot of them and we had trawlers that went around shooting them up and exploding them."

France eventually came into view and HMS Jason got so close that Sealey could see individual landmarks. "As we got nearer to the French coast I could see this clock tower at Arromanches. I couldn't see the time on it but I could see the tower. We went in as close as we dared and then turned to sweep mines again. Then all the big ships came in and started hammering the coast."

Sealey was aware that he was in the vanguard of the Allied invasion but at the time he found it difficult to absorb the significance of the moment. "We were right in the forefront of the invasion but we were so busy doing things that you didn't think about what was happening.

The funny thing is when you're in with a lot of men together you've got that comradeship and you don't think about yourself."

The planning of Operation Neptune had been meticulous and because of the courageous work of the minesweepers relatively few warships, transport or landing craft were seriously damaged or lost to the mines. All 350 vessels survived by the end of 6 June, making Neptune the most well-executed minesweeping operation ever undertaken. The American naval commander of the Western Task Force Rear Admiral Alan Kirk praised all the Allied minesweepers: "It can be said without fear of contradiction that minesweeping was the keystone in the arch of this operation. All of the waters were suitable for mining, and plans of unprecedented complexity were required. The performance of the minesweepers can only be described as magnificent."

Nevertheless, HMS Jason's work was not over. Sword Beach was on the eastern flank of the Allied assault zone and therefore particularly vulnerable to attack from the Le Havre area. However, Sealey could not have foreseen that the most deadly problem would emerge from his own side.

### Securing the invasion channels

After D-Day Sealey continued performing minesweeping duties and almost had an unfortunate incident with part of the invasion force. "We kept sweeping mines in the English Channel for a long time and then we had a mishap with one of the landing craft, which was coming across with some tanks and we went smack straight into her side!"

Shortly afterwards HMS Jason was deployed to the area off Le Havre in late August 1944, 11 weeks after D-Day. By now, Allied armies had advanced well inland but the Germans

**"THE PLANNING OF OPERATION NEPTUNE HAD BEEN METICULOUS AND BECAUSE OF THE COURAGEOUS WORK OF THE MINESWEEPERS, RELATIVELY FEW WARSHIPS, TRANSPORT OR LANDING CRAFT WERE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED OR LOST TO THE MINES"**

Below: A rocket fired from a Typhoon of No 181 Squadron, Royal Air Force, on its way towards buildings at Carpiquet airfield



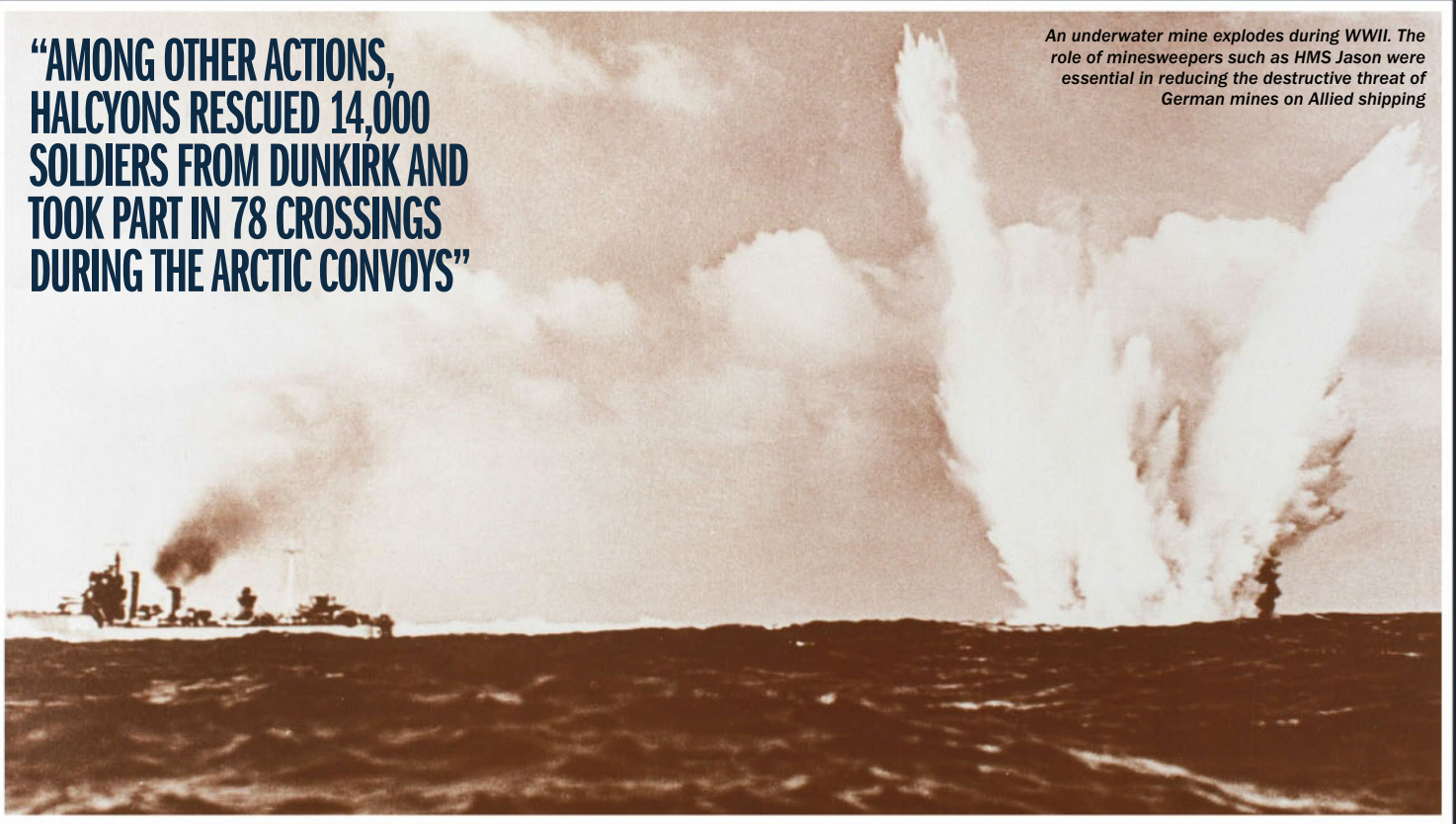
The Hawker Typhoon was a fearsome British fighter-bomber that became known for ferocious ground attacks and its capabilities as a low-altitude interceptor





**“AMONG OTHER ACTIONS, HALCYONS RESCUED 14,000 SOLDIERS FROM DUNKIRK AND TOOK PART IN 78 CROSSINGS DURING THE ARCTIC CONVOYS”**

*An underwater mine explodes during WWII. The role of minesweepers such as HMS Jason were essential in reducing the destructive threat of German mines on Allied shipping*



# HALCYON-CLASS MINESWEEPERS

CLAUDE SEALEY'S SHIP HMS JASON WAS PART OF AN IMPORTANT BUT UNDERAPPRECIATED GROUP OF NAVAL VESSELS THAT CLEARED MINES FROM THE HOSTILE WATERS OF WWII

Between 1934-39 the Royal Navy commissioned 21 oil-fired minesweepers that became designated as Halcyon-class ships. The navy had first deployed improvised minesweepers during the Crimean War but the technology developed rapidly during WWI when Flower-class minesweeping sloops were introduced.

By the 1930s the Halcyon-class minesweeper was being developed. These vessels had a weight displacement that was 175 tonnes less than their Grimsby-class sloop counterparts as well as being 20 feet shorter. Because of the nature of their work, the minesweepers needed to be both small

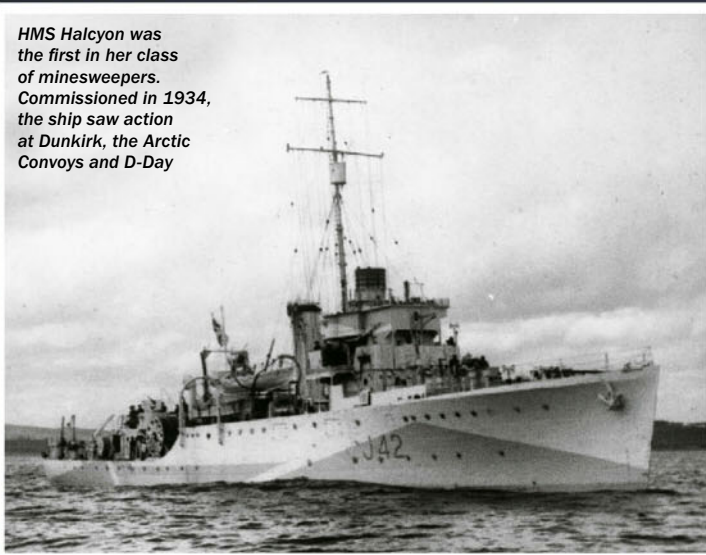
in size and have as shallow a draught as possible. Consequently, to save weight the ships were only provided with the most basic armament including small numbers naval or anti-aircraft guns, machine guns and depth charges.

To compensate for the relative lack of weapons the minesweepers relied on cover from other warships or aircraft for protection. So long as there was adequate cover Halcyon-class ships still had to continue sweeping for as long as possible even when under attack.

The minesweepers had various deployments during WWII including the Atlantic and Arctic oceans,

the North and Mediterranean seas and home waters. Among other actions, Halcyons rescued 14,000 soldiers from Dunkirk and took part in 78 crossings during the Arctic Convoys. By May 1945 nine ships had been lost and 578 crew members were killed. At the end of the war Winston Churchill recognised the minesweepers service with an official statement: "The work you do is hard and dangerous. You rarely get and never seek publicity; your only concern is to do your job, and you have done it nobly. No work has been more vital than yours; no work has been better done. The ports have been kept open and Britain breathed. The nation is once again proud of you."

*HMS Halcyon was the first in her class of minesweepers. Commissioned in 1934, the ship saw action at Dunkirk, the Arctic Convoys and D-Day*



*HMS Jason in 1941. Sealey served on this Halcyon-class minesweeper from 1942-45*



still held the important port of Le Havre, which had heavy shore batteries that continually threatened shipping. The Germans also had E-boats, midget submarines and explosive motorboats at their disposal that could inflict night attacks at Arromanches where Sealey had been sweeping weeks earlier. Despite the elapsed time HMS Jason still operated out of Arromanches and anchored in the 'Trout Line', which was a defensive perimeter of warships formed around merchant shipping.

1<sup>st</sup> MSF consisted of Halcyon-class minesweepers that included HMS Harrier, Britomart, Hussar, Salamander, Gleaner and Jason. Their main task was to clear mines from the area between Portsmouth and Arromanches at night but on 22 August 1944 their orders were changed. The flotilla was now required to clear a German field of magnetic mines off Le Havre, which would enable Royal Navy warships to bombard the port and assist the advancing Canadian Army.

Between 22-25 August the flotilla swept the minefield that was about five miles off the French coast between Fécamp and Cap d'Antifer before HMS Gleaner and HMS Harrier left for repairs. With a reduced number of ships the flotilla was expected stay in dock at Arromanches but after 24 hours' rest the remaining vessels were ordered to return to minesweeping duties. One of Sealey's superiors aboard HMS Jason was the flotilla's navigating officer Lieutenant H. G. S. Brownbill who later recalled that the redeployment order was not unusual. "We knew full well that the clearance and search of the area off Le Havre had not been completed, and we also knew

## "THE SHIPS BURST INTO FLAMES WITH THE BRITOMART LISTING TO PORT WHILE THE TYPHOONS SWEEPED AROUND FOR ANOTHER ATTACK"

that clearance was also needed to permit a heavy force to the area to bombard the Le Havre coastal region. I was promised that the orders would be amended to allow the 1<sup>st</sup> MSF to complete its unfinished search and clearance. Happy that all was at hand, I returned to Jason."

After these arrangements were made signals of the amended order should have been circulated to other service commands. All services had to be given advance notice of movements at sea by Allied ships so that every activity could be accounted for. If all commands were well-informed then RAF aircraft based on landing strips in Normandy could intercept enemy vessels. Unfortunately, this normally smooth system of operations would not go to plan for the remaining ships of 1<sup>st</sup> MSF.

### 'Friendly' fire

On 27 August 1944 HMS Jason set off with her fellow minesweepers HMS Britomart, Salamander and Hussar along with the supporting trawlers HMS Lord Ashfield and Colsay. Sealey recalls that the weather was fine. "We got orders to go off the French coast at Le Havre because the Jerries still held that part of France on the Seine. We were out there sweeping in beautiful hot weather in August."

HMS Jason was guiding the flotilla and flanked by the Britomart and Salamander on either side. HMS Hussar was following

behind while the two trawlers were laying buoy lines in the rear. At 1.30pm Sealey recalled seeing RAF aircraft appear but in unfavourable circumstances. "These aeroplanes came over and buzzed us a couple of times and we knew they were ours. However before we knew what was happening they came back around and sunk two of our ships and blew one in half!"

The aircraft in question were 16 rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon fighter-bombers from 263 and 266 (Rhodesia) Squadrons and 12 supporting Supermarine Spitfires from a Polish squadron. HMS Jason immediately fired her anti-aircraft guns before signalling at 1.32pm and 1.34pm, "Am being attacked by friendly aircraft." At the same time the other ships were also under attack, particularly the Britomart, Salamander and Hussar. The ships burst into flames with the Britomart listing to port while the Typhoons swept around for another attack.

HMS Jason was raked by aircraft cannon fire that disabled the anti-aircraft guns and cut the steam pipe that made a loud shrieking noise. At 1.37pm the Jason signalled, "Three ships hit and in danger of sinking," while the Britomart continued to sink and HMS Hussar and Salamander burned heavily.

Sealey became one of the many casualties during the attack. "I got wounded. We were attacked by RAF Typhoons firing rockets but what hit me was ordinary cannon fire. I was part of a watch party that was aft of starboard. It

RAF personnel loading RP-3 60-pounder rockets onto the launch rails of a Hawker Typhoon. The 20mm cannons of the aircraft are also visible



Bombs hit the tail plane of an American B-17 Flying Fortress by the bomber flying above it during a raid over a German city

# ALLIED “BLUE-ON-BLUE” INCIDENTS OF WWII

THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THE WEAPONS USED BETWEEN 1939-45 INCREASED THE CHANCES OF DEVASTATING FRIENDLY FIRE ATTACKS

The friendly fire attack on 1st Minesweeping Flotilla off Le Havre was sadly not a unique case during WWII and blue-on-blue incidents occurred everywhere on land, sea and in the air.

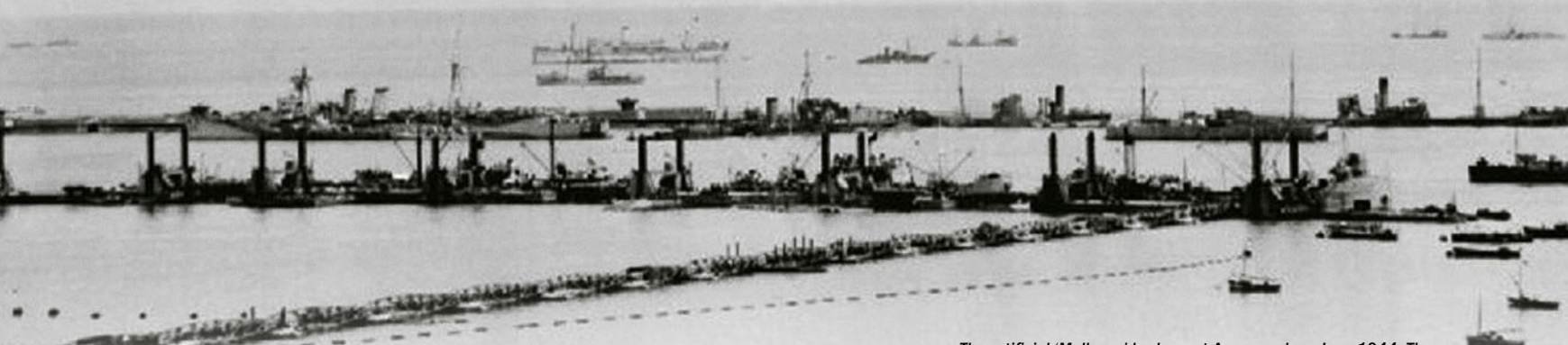
Despite the meticulous planning, accidents were strikingly prevalent around the time of the D-Day landings. During a simulated exercise on 28 April 1944 eight LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) were practising landing troops into Lyme Bay,

England, when nine German E-boats attacked the transports leaving more than 600 Americans dead. To make matters worse, in the confusion a British cruiser then shelled the landing troops with live ammunition that resulted in another 308 Americans being killed.

As part of the Normandy breakout in July 1944 Allied aircraft accidentally bombed American positions. The incident was due to miscommunications over poor weather conditions but the result was 136 American soldiers killed.

However, worse was to come on 3 May 1945 (five days before VE Day) when RAF Hawker Typhoons attacked German transport ships SS Cap Arcona, Deutschland and Thielbek in the Bay of Lübeck. The three ships were filled with thousands of Allied POWs and prisoners from Nazi concentration camps but the RAF did not know this and attacked with bombs, rockets and cannon fire. The Cap Arcona and Thielbek were both sunk and at least 7,000 people were killed with only around 400 survivors. The incident has since become known as the deadliest case of friendly fire during the war and possibly in history.

**“THE THREE SHIPS WERE FILLED WITH THOUSANDS OF ALLIED POWS AND PRISONERS FROM NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS BUT THE RAF DID NOT KNOW THIS AND ATTACKED WITH BOMBS, ROCKETS AND CANNON FIRE”**



The artificial 'Mulberry' harbour at Arromanches, June 1944. The construction of this harbour would not have been possible without the efforts of the 1st Minesweeping Flotilla on D-Day

Out of the two ships that were sunk on 27 August 1944 HMS Hussar suffered the most losses with around 55 men killed



HMS Britomart's crew had been praised for their work on Arctic Convoys but she was later sunk on 27 August 1944 with the loss of over 20 men



HMS Salamander, which was one of the two ships guiding HMS Jason, was blown in half by friendly fire and later had to be scrapped



was just outside the wardroom where there was a ladder that went up to the boat deck. During the bombing the area where we were suddenly became full of blue sparks flashing and I was bowled over on the boat deck. I ended up lying on the deck and when I got up there was blood everywhere and that was it. I wasn't wounded badly but I was put in the wardroom with the other wounded. I had bits of shrapnel in my right foot, back and three or four pieces in my hip. I had those pieces for ages."

After a final attack at 1.40pm the aeroplanes flew away. The attack had only lasted around 10 minutes but the RAF left behind burning, sinking ships and a sea that was strewn with debris and struggling survivors. Tragically, the ordeal was not over as Sealey explains: "HMS Britomart copped it and she went straight down and then HMS Hussar also went down. HMS Salamander was blown in half and my ship HMS Jason also got hit. At the same time the Jerries fired from their shore batteries and there were all these survivors in the water and their heads were being blown off. It was so terrible."

Despite her own considerable damage HMS Jason had taken the lead in rescuing survivors from the stricken Salamander and Hussar. During the evacuation from the Hussar, Jason's crew put down scrambling nets and rescued over a dozen survivors when the German shore batteries opened fire. One shell landed 100 yards from the Jason and forced her to retire with sailors still in the water. The ship then laid smoke screens to provide cover while it towed the Salamander back to Arromanches.

After returning to Arromanches the Jason moved on to evacuate the wounded, including Sealey, in what turned out to be a personal blessing in disguise. "HMS Jason had quite a few holes in her but our skipper steamed us into Cherbourg and there was a hospital ship ready for us for the wounded including myself. We came back over to Portsmouth but instead of being sent to the local naval hospital I was put on an army train to Basingstoke initially and

then on to Sedgfield, County Durham, where I met my wife who was a nurse."

### The cover-up

The RAF attack on the 1<sup>st</sup> MSF had caused enormous damage. HMS Britomart and Hussar had been sunk while HMS Salamander was so badly damaged that she had to be scrapped. There was also heavy damage and casualties on other ships and in total 117 sailors were killed with a further 147-153 wounded. It was the largest single naval loss of Operation Overlord that was not the result of German action.

Sealey contends that his attackers knew the ships' identity but had to proceed because of pressure from the admiralty. "The planes knew who we were after flying around two or three times but whoever was ashore in France – an admiral apparently – said that shipping should not be in that area and that they had to get on and do it. In those days you'd sometimes get a ship with a British flag up and it would turn out to be German so the planes were given strict orders to sink whatever was there but they knew we were British."

The tragic incident had occurred because of poor communication. Naval officers had signalled orders for the sweep on 27 August but a routine copy had not been sent. The officer responsible was new in his post and his supervisor had not noticed the error. Additionally, the naval shore radar was disabled that day and consequently the flotilla was not spotted moving into the area.

Despite these errors the RAF had themselves expressed doubt about German ships operating off Le Havre in broad daylight. The operations record book of 263 Squadron stated, "Six ships were located at the given pinpoint sailing southwest. Four were probably destroyers and two motor vessels. Owing to doubt as to the identity the controller was asked four times whether to attack. The controller said there were no friendly ships in the area and ordered an attack."

## "WE WEREN'T ANGRY WITH THE RAF BUT WE DID BLAME THE ADMIRAL"

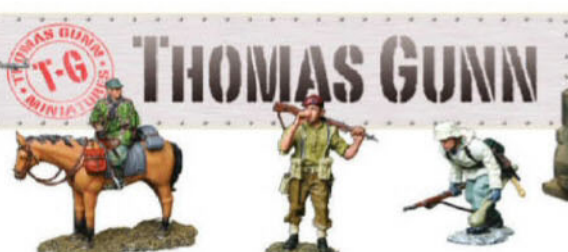
Such miscommunication cost many lives and there was an immediate cover-up of the incident. Sealey recalls, "We didn't know if there was an enquiry, it was all hushed up."

There had actually been an enquiry at Arromanches two days after the incident, which concluded that Rear Admiral James Rivett-Carnac had ordered the RAF attack because he had not been informed of the flotilla's work in the area. Three subordinate officers were subsequently court-martialled with one – Acting Commander D N Venables – receiving a severe reprimand for not thoroughly checking the amended order on 27 August.

None of this complicated set of badly relayed orders was fully explained to victims like Sealey and his crew members, who were left in the dark over the details. "It was quite some afterwards when we knew what had actually happened. We weren't angry with the RAF but we did blame the admiral. Somebody should have picked a phone and said, 'We've sent these minesweepers around there because there were still Germans in the area.'"

The admiralty's embarrassment was so acute that recommended bravery awards for personnel caught up in the incident were almost denied until one outraged senior admiral intervened. Nevertheless, the cover-up was strictly imposed as Sealey remembers. "Afterwards we were told, 'Do not repeat what happened here and by whom.' We were given strict orders not to mention it."

It was an ignoble end to an avoidable incident that had been created by simple errors and inexcusable negligence. Men like Sealey from the 1<sup>st</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla had been a crucial factor in making the Allied invasion of Europe possible and they were ultimately ill-rewarded for their hard work and success.



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# FRITIGERN

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# GOTHIC GENIUS

His cavalry slammed into the flank of the Roman forces as they assaulted his laager of wagons, taking them completely by surprise. Everything was going according to Fritigern's plan...

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

**T**he Gothic leader Fritigern (or Fridigern, perhaps based on the Gothic Frithugairns) is, arguably, one of the most under-appreciated commanders in the ancient world.

At the head of a complex confederation of Gothic tribes, he imposed a devastating defeat on the forces of the Eastern Roman Empire at the Battle of Adrianople (or Hadrianople), in August 378 CE. This victory, against a Roman army commanded by the Emperor Valens in person, has long been recognised as one of the watershed moments of history.

In recent years, there has been some revisionism regarding the battle's significance, downplaying its impact, but it was once considered the moment the Roman Empire ended and the Middle Ages began. This calamitous day, when the Eastern Roman Emperor Valens was killed and his army utterly destroyed, was certainly recognised by contemporary historians. The Gothic cavalry charge that devastated the Roman legions has also been seen as the origin of the heavy cavalry armies that would dominate warfare for more than a millennium.

These theories are rejected today since they assumed the Goths used the stirrup (actually introduced to Europe in the 6th Century and probably first taken advantage of by Charlemagne). Accounts of the battle, however, have long focused on the failings

of the Romans and their emperor, rather than on any deliberate and intentional plan by Fritigern. There are more than enough sources, however, to reassess his qualities as a commander.

### Investigating the evidence

Multiple sources refer to the catastrophe that befell the Roman Empire at Adrianople. The most reliable source remains the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, a contemporary from Antioch and a military veteran, who concluded his history of the Roman Empire with Adrianople. There is optimism in Ammianus; he states that those who called it the worst disaster that ever befell the Romans were ignorant of their history. Rome had experienced (and recovered from) worse disasters. Ammianus believed that the general would arise who would overcome the Goths, just as they had in crises past.

Only half of Ammianus' work survives, but this portion deals with the quarter century from 354 to 378, all within the span of Ammianus' lifetime. The first 13 books (which are lost) covered the history of the empire from 96 to 353. Other sources survive in various states, such as the histories of Zosimus, Eunapius and Jordanes or the church writers Sozomen and Socrates. Often, these writers did not focus on military history, but they can still be useful.

Fritigern and Adrianople give lie to the common phrase 'winners write history' since, despite his victory and the permanent

establishment of the Gothic peoples within the Roman Empire, their version of events does not survive. All our accounts are Roman (whether written in Latin or Greek) and this has slanted our view of both the battle and the man. We therefore have the Latinisation of the names of tribes and individuals. In many cases, our sources themselves are inconsistent; Ammianus names the child king of the Greuthungi as both Vithericus (31.4.12) and Viderichus (31.3.3).

### Fritigern and the Thervingi

We first meet Fritigern in Ammianus as one of the leaders of the Thervingian Goths crossing into the Roman Empire over the Danube River in 376 AD. They, as well as many other tribes, were under pressure from the Huns further to the east, and had been forced to flee their homes. The Thervingian Goths (or simply Thervingi) had become Romanised throughout the 4th Century through contact with the empire. This had been through trade and employment in the Roman army. They had also been converted to Arian Christianity by Wulfila earlier in the century.

We get no background on Fritigern when he is introduced. Other writers, such as Sozomen and Socrates of Constantinople, who both wrote histories of the church, introduce him earlier, in order to deal with his conversion to Christianity. This version has Fritigern as a

**“HE IMPOSED A DEVASTATING DEFEAT ON THE FORCES OF THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE AT THE BATTLE OF ADRIANOPLE IN AUGUST 378 CE. THIS VICTORY, AGAINST A ROMAN ARMY COMMANDED BY THE EMPEROR VALENS IN PERSON, HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE WATERSHED MOMENTS OF HISTORY”**

## BARBARIAN KING

Although there is no known portrait of Fritigern, certain aspects of Gothic clothing, armour and weapons are known. Depictions of the Goths are difficult to date precisely to the period of the battle of Adrianople, but sculptures showing them earlier in the 4th Century are remarkably similar to those that date from later, and even from the 5th Century. The styles of hair, helmet, swords and armour here are all typically Gothic for the period and drawn from a variety of sources showing Gothic warriors.



The Battle of Adrianople is seen by many as a turning point in the history of the Roman Empires

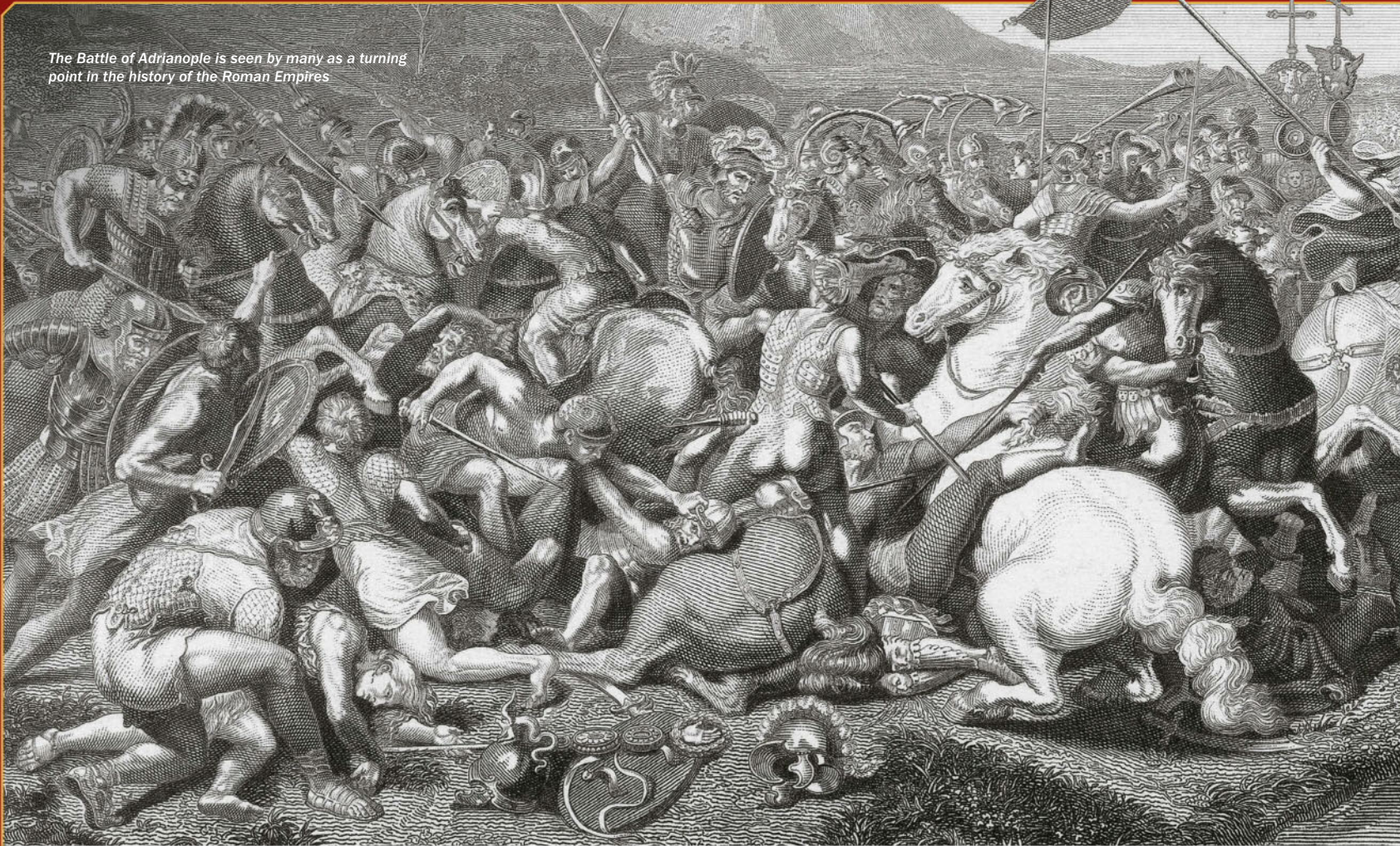


Image: Alamy

rival leader to Athanaric among the Thervingi. According to Sozomen (6.37), who names him Phritigernes, Fritigern asked Valens for help in his war against Athanaric and, in return, he and his people converted to the religion of the emperor (Valens was also an Arian). This version reveals perhaps another reason for the Thervingi wanting land within the empire, but it also shows high level contact between them and the Romans, as well as the high level of Romanisation of the Goths at the time.

The Goths promised obedience to Emperor Valens and were invited into the empire to be settled in Moesia. Ammianus tells us that Valens believed he would have a vast number of new recruits and, therefore, an invincible army. Ammianus' judgement (31.4.6) is succinct – the ruin of the Roman world was brought in with “stormy eagerness” by the Romans themselves. His phrase, “the barriers of our frontiers were unlocked,” suggests the idea that letting the barbarians into Rome was a great error. There had been earlier settlements of barbarian peoples in the empire, however, and modern scholars ascribe many more reasons to the fall of the Roman Empire than simply letting barbarians settle within its borders in 376. For Ammianus and his contemporaries, though, this was the moment at which, in hindsight, they could pinpoint all of their subsequent troubles.

**“THE GOTHs CHARGED THE ROMAN FORCE WITHOUT A CARE FOR THEIR LIVES AND DEFEATED THEIR ENEMY EASILY”**

Once the Goths had been settled, Rome's commanders (Maximus and Lupicinus) mistreated the new arrivals, extorting vast sums for meagre supplies of food. Rather than being men of skill and reputation, they were, according to Ammianus, men of stained reputations. Again, Ammianus summarises that “their treacherous greed was the cause of all our evils”. Forced by famine and their mistreatment at the hands of the Roman commanders, Fritigern and the Thervingi revolted. At the same time, another tribe, the Greuthungi, had gathered on the far bank of the Danube and asked if they too could be admitted into the empire. They were refused, but taking advantage of the revolt, also crossed into the empire.

One of the remarkable aspects of Ammianus' account is how much he blames Roman actions for what was to happen at Adrianople. His description of Fritigern is full of admiration and praise. When first mentioned in more than passing, he is complimented for “his natural cleverness in foresight, protecting himself against anything that might happen”. Fritigern has *providentia* or “foresight”, a very Roman trait in a commander. He is also described as quick-witted, crafty and playing both sides – wanting to appear as if he were obeying his oath to Valens, while at the same time joining up with the Greuthungi. Fritigern was invited to a banquet by

Lupicinus, and his retinue were put to the sword. Ammianus has him talk his way out, arguing that he could quell the concerns of his soldiers, who were becoming unruly outside the town. In Jordanes' Gothic History (136), however, Fritigern perceived of the plot against him and escaped, cutting his way through the perfidious Romans, sword in hand, and rescuing his men. Despite the romanticism of this account, it seems more likely that Fritigern was able to talk his way out of an assassination plot.

### Revolt in full flight

Fleeing from this attempt on his life, Fritigern's men immediately began to rampage through the countryside of Thrace, taking the supplies they had been denied by the Roman commanders. Lupicinus mustered his whole force at Marcianopolis – the barbarians he faced were suffering the effects of famine and were poorly equipped. Nonetheless, the Goths charged the Roman force without a care for their lives and defeated their enemy easily. They were then able to arm themselves with Roman weapons, armour and shields.

More Gothic tribes (who had been in service in the Roman army) now joined the rebellion and they too armed themselves with the weapons of the Roman dead, especially at the city of Adrianopolis, where there was one of the state-owned arms factories, or *fabricae*. There, the chief magistrate, the *duumvir*, had armed the poor and the armourers, but they were overcome by the Goths.

Fritigern quickly realised that his men were not suited to a siege (he is given the pithy





# THE BATTLE OF ADRIANOPE

**05** The Gothic cavalry charge into the flank of the Romans, causing the cavalry to flee and forcing the infantry to press into their comrades.

**03** Fires are lit by the Goths, possibly as a signal to their cavalry.

**01** The Romans, eager for battle, deploy as soon as they arrive on the field, not waiting for the left flank to fully arrive or draw up. Skirmishing begins.

**06** A massed charge of Gothic infantry from the laager throws the Romans into confusion. Eventually they break and run.

**02** Several envoys are despatched from Fritigern to Valens, playing for time.

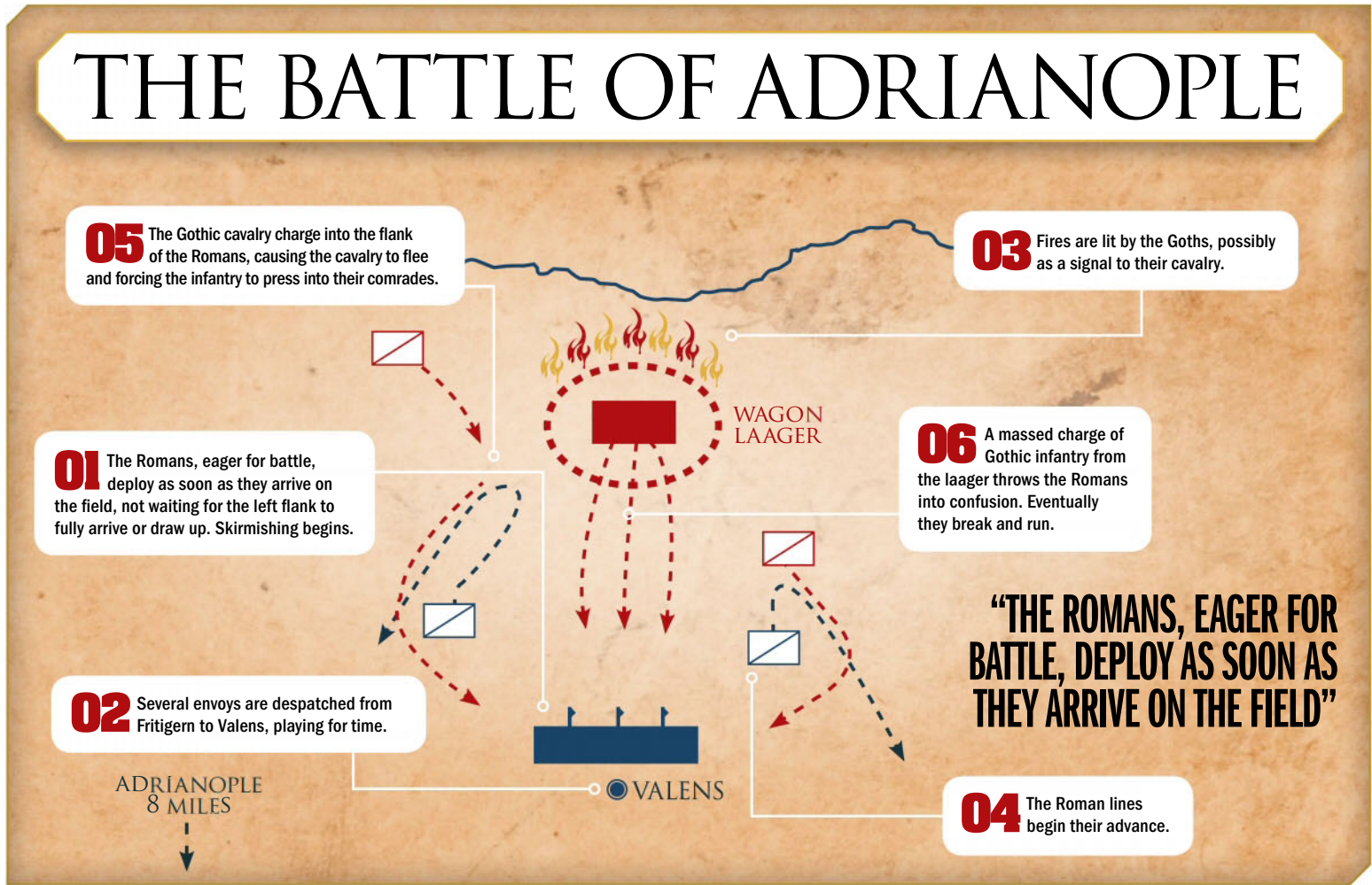
**“THE ROMANS, EAGER FOR BATTLE, DEPLOY AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVE ON THE FIELD”**

**04** The Roman lines begin their advance.

ADRIANOPE  
8 MILES

VALENS

WAGON  
LAAGER



A 19th Century illustration of Bishop Wulfila explaining the gospels to the Goths. The arms and armour are relatively accurately depicted and correspond to what we know of 4th Century warfare. The leg bindings of the Goths correspond to depictions on 4th Century sculpture.

## GOTHIC CULTURE

WE RELY ON GREEK AND LATIN SOURCES FOR THE CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE GOTHs, WHICH (WE SUSPECT) OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD BARBARIAN CULTURES OR EXPLAINED THEM IN TERMS THAT THEY COULD UNDERSTAND

Gothic culture was made up of a series of tribes, each with its own chieftain. In our sources these men are often described as kings. Fritigern is named as one such man, originally with another leader, Alavius, but Fritigern soon becomes the main focus of Ammianus' narrative and called 'king' or 'duces'.

The actual organisation of the confederation of these Gothic tribes was much more complex, with each tribe having its own leader and men, but they may well have recognised (or even voted for) an overall leader. Fritigern is certainly presented in such a manner (even termed their king, despite there also being other kings within his confederation).

In Ammianus and Jordanes we do get the idea that kings could be chosen (creating a new dynasty) and sometimes we have evidence of a regency by leading nobles (such as that of Althaeus and Spahrax of the Greuthungi).

Atharic is termed 'judge' rather than king of the Thervingi when he first appears, but he is also called a king later. Indeed, there may have been a variety of organisational structures within the Gothic tribes, which our sources do not describe. There may have been lesser chiefs, like an aristocracy. Several of Fritigern's commanders certainly fit this pattern (Farnobius, Sueridas and Colias). Both Fritigern and Alavius are termed 'duces' and may have led a large section of the Thervingi who abandoned Atharic. We hear no more of Alavius after the banquet of Lupicinus (and it is often stated that he was murdered there when Fritigern escaped).

phrase that he “kept peace with walls”) and set his men to ravaging the rich and unprotected parts of the countryside, and moved into the province of Thracia. More and more men joined the rebellion, including the Greuthungi leaders Alathaeus and Saphrax, who would become the commanders of Fritigern’s cavalry.

### Imperial response

The Emperor Valens was at Antioch when he learned of the revolt. It was so serious that he put off plans in the east and turned his attention to the Goths. He sent two (unfortunately poor) generals, Profuturus and Trajanus, ahead. The scale of the crisis is shown by the fact that Gratian, the Emperor of the West and Valens’ nephew, sent troops under Frigiderius, his commander from Pannonia, and then more with his magister militum, Richomeres. When these forces combined, Richomeres took command of the whole force in 377.

We are told that the Goths had arranged their wagons into a circle, (a karagos in Greek). The best equivalent seems to be the Afrikaaner wagon laager seen during the Boer War. Although the Goths moved camp regularly, the Roman forces under Richomeres kept them under surveillance. When the Goths became aware of this shadowing (either through observation or deserters), they stayed put and summoned all of the marauding bands to a central position. This resulted in a stand-off, though some skirmishes did break out among lightly armed troops.

We are told that all the Goths and their kings were keen for war. Eventually, the battle lines were joined and there was great slaughter on both sides (Ammianus 31.7.13-16). Despite this, the battle was indecisive and the Romans retreated to Marcianopolis, while the Goths withdrew to within their wagon circle. Richomeres returned to Gaul to summon more troops and Frigiderius to Pannonia. The Romans also fortified the mountain passes to prevent a Gothic breakout. The Goths at this juncture formed an alliance with some Huns and Halani (or Alans), who were eager for the rich spoils to be had from the Roman provinces.

The combined force did break out and ravaged the territory of Thrace and the River Ister as far as the Hellespont, destroying a Roman force commanded by one Brazimeres. They next turned on the forces of Frigiderius. All of this Gothic activity is described as a ravaging, mindless horde, breaking out and pouring over the plain of Thrace. It is worth remembering, however, that these Goths were Romanised to a large extent and had been joined by groups who had been resident within the empire for some time. We can be certain they knew what they were doing and that there was a plan behind it. Although we are not informed specifically, the likely author of that plan was Fritigern. He was attacking the Roman troops that had withdrawn to winter quarters individually; a sound strategy.

When the Goths turned on a newly returned Frigiderius at the city of Beroea in Thrace, however, they found that he was more than a match for them. He withdrew to Illyricum and came across a Gothic chieftain, Farnobius, whom he defeated.

## “THIS GOTHIC ACTIVITY IS DESCRIBED AS A RAVAGING, MINDLESS HORDE, BREAKING OUT AND POURING OVER THE PLAIN OF THRACE”

### The year of disaster

In the following year, Valens summoned Gratian to him, and intended to march at the head of an army to Thrace, but Gratian was prevented from coming quickly to Valens’ aid due to tribes across the Rhine rebelling and therefore tying up his time. He defeated these thoroughly and then continued east, while Valens himself moved from Antioch to Constantinople, appointing a new commander, Sebastianus. He made preparations and learned that the permanent Goth camp was near the city of Beroea, but that the countryside was full of plundering bands. One was defeated by the vigorous Sebastianus and Ammianus’ phrase (31.11.5) “Fritigern was greatly alarmed” implies that he was in overall command of the Goths and probably had been since the start. Fritigern summoned all of the tribes together.

Sebastianus wrote to Valens exaggerating his “great success” and, even though he knew Gratian was en route, Valens decided to face the Goths alone. This is one of the main criticisms of Valens’ conduct, especially since Gratian had been summoned so that the combined armies could face the Goths together. It is possible that Valens wanted to achieve some military success on his own to compete with Gratian’s victories.

The Goths advanced slowly and cautiously, moving their great camp (and coming within 15 miles of Constantinople). Valens’ skirmishers reported that the entire Gothic force was made up of no more than 10,000 men. This was a grave error and hard to credit that a combined force of ‘only’ 10,000 had been causing so much trouble in the region. The disaster that unfolded at Adrianople can also be blamed on this misinformation, plus the Roman Emperor and his commanders believing it far too readily. Eunapius estimated that the Goth numbers were actually 200,000, but this is too high. Even 100,000 is probably too many, but it was many more than 10,000. So, Valens’ force of 20 to 30,000 men was probably outnumbered and it would be assaulting a wagon ‘city’.

Modern reconstructions have the two armies as similar in size, in which case the superiority of the Gothic troops and their tactics are even more apparent. It is also probable that Fritigern was moving his forces in various bands or tribes, rather than in a single mass. Not only would this make foraging and grazing difficult, it would also make his precise numbers more difficult to assess. This was deliberate; Ammianus talks of the Goths fearing a sally against

**Right: A Gothic warrior. His arms and armour would have been the same as the Romans he faced**

them (31.11.3), but they had defeated several Roman forces already and only single tribes had been defeated when they were caught alone and isolated.

Encouraged by the small numbers of their enemy and his desire to achieve a victory of his own, Valens was determined to attack at the earliest opportunity. Richomeres arrived from Gratian, stating that the emperor was on his way and urging Valens to wait. Valens held a council of war and, despite several arguments being presented in favour of waiting, Valens decided to attack immediately.

At this point, an envoy arrived from Fritigern (a presbyter and some humble folk, possibly monks), requesting Thrace as a new land for them and promising a lasting peace if this was granted. The various negotiations that followed are usually argued to be because Fritigern had been outmanoeuvred, but even Ammianus thought that Fritigern was simply playing for time to summon all his troops to him. Time was not on Fritigern’s side, however, and he must have known that Gratian was on his way with another army to reinforce Valens.

It seems far more likely that Fritigern had another plan and that his actions in sending multiple envoys were deliberate; the time he needed was a matter of hours rather than days. We are even told that Fritigern was full of trickery and pretence “all too skilled in craft and various forms of deception” (31.12.9). With his envoy he sent a private letter asking that Valens bring his army close to the Goths, ready for war, “to entice them to adopt conditions favourable to the Roman state” through fear of the Roman army. Fritigern’s forces had shown that, combined and equipped, they had little to fear from the Roman forces they had seen up to that point. It seems more likely that Fritigern was luring Valens into his trap. One of Ammianus’ criticisms of Valens character was that he was a procrastinator (31.14.7) and

Fritigern had dealt with the emperor in person before, so he may have known the tenor of the man he was up against. The envoys were dismissed and the army prepared to march.

### 9 August, 378 CE

The day dawned hot and Valens’ army marched “with extreme haste” from Adrianopolis towards the Goths, reaching the wagon





A depiction, on the Arch of Constantine, of 4th Century Roman soldiers assaulting a city. By the time of Adrianople, most of the Goths would have had Roman equipment looted from soldiers and towns

circle at the eighth hour, about two in the afternoon. Ammianus tells us that the wagons were arranged in a perfect circle, “turned by the lathe”. This phrase has not caused any historian pause.

The Gothic position was clearly deliberately chosen and carefully drawn up. The Romans moved into action on the right, while the centre waited, and the left was still deploying. Ammianus’ accounts mention at this point (31.12.12) that Fritigern’s cavalry under Althaeus and Saphrax was far away and, because of that, Fritigern sent more envoys. Almost universally, this is interpreted to mean that his cavalry force was away foraging. This cannot be the case since they were to return very soon and deliberately charge the Roman flank – hardly an action they would be prepared to do if they were foraging.

It seems more likely that Fritigern knew exactly where his cavalry were and rather than delay because they might arrive in time, his playing for time was a matter of minutes, allowing them to get into a pre-arranged position to deliver their planned charge. This seems entirely in keeping with the tricks and deception Fritigern was known for and with the carefully prepared position of the Gothic laager.

What is more, the first envoys sent were of low rank and Fritigern knew they would be rejected. Ammianus talks of this “pretended truce” (31.12.13) to allow the cavalry to return. He then adds that in addition to waiting for the cavalry, the wait was so that: “Our soldiers might be exposed to the summer heat and exhausted by their dry throats, while the broad plains gleamed with fires, which the enemy were feeding with wood and dry fuel, for this same purpose.”

This ‘trick’ of lighting fires is accepted by all accounts even though the smoke would affect the Goths just as much as it would the Romans. One aspect that has not been considered is that these fires were in fact intended as a signal to the cavalry that all was ready, or even a signal from the cavalry that they were coming (and if some low-ranking envoys happened to be sacrificed for this plan, so be it).

Ammianus then notes (31.12.14) that Fritigern, “shrewd to foresee the future and

## “THE ROMAN ARMY WAS DESERTED BY ITS CAVALRY, WHO FLED AT THE FIRST CHARGE, AND THE INFANTRY WERE CRUSHED”

fearing the uncertainty of war,” sent a common soldier requesting Roman hostages to secure the peace he desired. This would seem to be yet more playing for time, so this request for hostages caused great debate at the tent of the emperor. Richomeres volunteered to go as hostage. Before he could arrive at the enemy’s laager, however, the skirmishers of one of the Roman commanders, probably the right flank, became heavily engaged with the Goths. Ammianus then tells us (31.12.17): “The Gothic cavalry, returning with Altheus and Saphrax, combined with a band of the Halani, dashed out as a thunder-bolt does near high mountains, and threw into confusion all those whom they could find in the way of their swift onslaught, and quickly slew them.”

This does not seem to be the arrival of groups of cavalry that had been away foraging, but part of a deliberate plan to deliver a cavalry charge into the enemy’s flank. As such, Fritigern’s delaying tactics, as well as his obviously careful selection and preparation of the Gothic position, were very deliberate. His plan was helped immensely by Valens’ eagerness for battle and several other mistakes, such as not conducting accurate reconnaissance.

The left wing of the Roman army was deserted by its cavalry, who fled at the first charge, and the infantry were crushed. The remainder of the Roman force were then pushed together. The Gothic infantry then made a charge from their wagons (again something that had been deliberately planned by Fritigern, rather than some spontaneous movement), which broke the Roman line and they fled. Zosimus (4.24.2) calls the battle an easy victory for the Goths (since the Romans were in disarray and overconfident) and a massacre. Only a moonless night brought an end to the killing. In the aftermath, according to Ammianus and Libanius, Valens died from an arrow wound and was never found. Another version of his demise is that he took refuge in an un-walled village or a peasant’s cottage, which was burned by the Goths.

The level of the disaster of Adrianople is difficult to assess – certainly the Roman army of the east had been destroyed and the emperor killed. Some estimates say two-thirds of the Roman army were killed. Contemporaries regarded it as the greatest disaster ever to befall them. Ammianus is more balanced than that (although the end of the Western Roman Empire was only two generations away). The Eastern Roman Empire (which we know as the Byzantine Empire) and which Adrianople affected more than the west, would survive for another 1,000 years. The very barbarians who visited the disaster of Adrianople upon the empire were, however, enlisted to help the new emperor, Theodosius I, by 382.

Fritigern seems to have had a reputation for tricks and treachery and was clearly respected among the Goths as the leader of their confederation. If we see Adrianople as a deliberate Gothic plan played out to perfection, combined with a series of dire Roman mistakes, the destruction of the Romans seems far more explicable. And Fritigern’s place as an unrecognised general of immense skill, trickery and planning should be assured. After Adrianople, Fritigern all but disappears from history, though he was still in place as the head of the confederation. He was succeeded by Alaric, another great Gothic military leader who would sack the city of Rome in 410.

### FURTHER READING

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# TANK KILLERS OF WORLD WAR ONE

WORDS ROBIN SCHÄFER

## PART II

The dawn of tank warfare on the battlefields of the Great War swiftly brought about the necessity for new anti-tank tactics and weaponry. When the first tanks broke through German lines on 15 September 1916, the defending infantry lacked any effective means to combat the new threat

In the months following the Battle of the Somme, artillery fire – both direct and indirect – had shown the greatest effect against British tanks, as had the specialised K-ammunition, steel core bullets fired by rifles and machine guns, plus bundled charges of multiple hand grenades. New specialised artillery pieces and new kinds of shells were developed and rushed into service while on the battlefield, and in the rearward areas behind the lines, new tactics and strategies were being developed.

To raise the spirits of the men and to motivate them further, a substantial kill-bounty of 500 Reichsmarks was offered to those German units that managed to destroy one of the iron beasts in combat. In general, German High Command believed that bundled charges and K-bullets, which were now issued in larger numbers, gave the infantry the edge against Allied armour. The value of the use of terrain was also recognised and put into tactical use during the construction of the Siegfriedstellung, in front of which triple Panzerspergräben (tank-blocking trenches) formed what appeared to be an impregnable obstacle.

On a strategic level, however, the lines for these defences were still drawn out to maximise the effectiveness of artillery and infantry fire and to secure terrain that offered itself as a starting point for German offensives. Nowhere along the front did the thought of

anti-tank capability influence the location of the defensive lines themselves.

Similarly, trenches of that kind were only to be found in front of that particular part of the Hindenburg Line. Requests to extend the defences further were denied – a mistake that would have lasting consequences. Due to their sparse and rare use on the battlefield, the real threat of the tank had not yet been fully understood and German High Command was content that sufficient means were in place to defeat the Allied offensives expected to be launched in the spring of 1917.

When the Nivelles Offensive, in front of Arras and at the Aisne, was torn apart by German

**“TO RAISE THE SPIRITS OF THE MEN AND TO MOTIVATE THEM FURTHER, A SUBSTANTIAL KILL-BOUNTY OF 500 REICHSMARKS WAS OFFERED TO THE UNITS OF THOSE WHO MANAGED TO DESTROY ONE OF THE IRON BEASTS IN COMBAT”**

defensive fire, in April 1917, the German XXV Army Corps reported triumphantly: “The tank threat has been overcome. The dedicated anti-tank guns of the artillery have performed brilliantly. There is nothing to be added to the subject of tank defence.” A report, meanwhile, by 27 Infantry Division proclaimed: “By equipping the infantry with K-ammunition and a trench cannon, means have been found that must mean the end of future tank attacks.”

The thought that Allied armour could be failing as a result of capital errors being made by the Allies was being drowned out by the joy of German success. During the Third Battle of Ypres, the feeling of German superiority in face of the tank was strengthened even further. Again, curtain fire by the artillery and direct fire by individual field pieces positioned near the front lines stalled the advance of British tanks.

The fact that the German success was largely based on the weather and the resulting ground conditions, however, remained largely unsaid. Nevertheless, in the same month, German High Command, suspicious of all the triumphant and glossed-over combat reports, sent out a despatch asking for true and honest information – only with this would it be possible to end the tank threat ‘once and for all’.

### **Cambrai: morale versus material?**

On the evening of 20 November 1917, the German front between Ribécourt and Banteux



**PART 1 OF TANK KILLERS CAN BE FOUND IN ISSUE 42  
VISIT [WWW.MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK](http://WWW.MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK)**

German propaganda  
photograph, original  
caption "Anti tank  
post, Hill 310"

lay battered. Some 142 German guns had fallen into enemy hands and the Allied offensive had not been repelled by German defensive fire before a breakthrough into the German lines had been achieved. The element of surprise, thick fog and the first en masse use of tanks had made German anti-tank defences largely ineffective. The few exceptions that had scored some notable successes against the British armour had involved small groups of infantry defending village streets and some field guns firing directly from advanced positions.

One of these guns would later give rise to the so-called 'Krüger Myth'. At the south-western edge of Flesquieres, it was said, a single field gun of the 108th Artillery Regiment had been brought into position where, over the course of the battle (and in the last phase manned by a single, death-defying NCO), it had destroyed no less than 16 British tanks.

In a British after-action report, Captain Dugdale of the British 6 Division mentioned that on the ridge at Flesquieres he could observe a battery of German artillery, of which all of the guns had been knocked out with the exception of one. Next to it lay the body of a German gunner, while in front of it stood the wrecks of five tanks, which had obviously been destroyed by him during the course of an intense final-stand battle. Dugdale's observations were repeated in Field Marshal Haig's dispatch, who also praised the gunner's bravery.

In Britain, the press was keen to take up the story, with the number of tanks increasing in every report. Interested in the fact that the enemy was singing the praises of one of their soldiers, the Germans set out to try to identify the unknown gunner. After a lot of debate and by using all kinds of source material and personal

**"NEAR ARRAS THE ENGLISH HAVE RUN INTO OUR REARWARD DEFENCES AFTER HAVING ADVANCED FOR ABOUT TWO KILOMETRES. THERE, OUR MACHINE GUNS DID THEIR JOB WELL AND STALLED THE ENGLISH ATTACK COMPLETELY. IN PANIC, MANY TRIED TO FIND COVER BEHIND ONE OF THEIR TANKS, YET THESE MACHINES STOOD HELPLESS ON THE GROUND WHILE THE DEAD PILED UP BEHIND THEM. THE EFFECT OF THE TANK HAS BEEN SEVERELY OVERRATED SINCE THEY MADE THEIR DEBUT ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THE FIGHTING IN APRIL HAS SHOWN CLEARLY WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THEM. WE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE VULNERABLE AND WHERE WE HAVE TO HIT THEM (...) ON OPEN GROUND THEY MOVE FORWARD AT THE SPEED OF A SLOWLY WALKING MAN. OUR BEST WEAPONS AGAINST THEM ARE SMALL CALIBRE TRENCH CANNON, WHICH CAN BE USED BY THE INFANTRY. NEAR ARRAS, K-AMMUNITION HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY USED AGAINST THEM HAVING BEEN FIRED FROM CLOSE RANGE. FUEL TANK AND CARBURETTOR, BOTH SITUATED ON THE LEFT AND RIGHT FRONT SIDE, ARE THE WEAKEST SPOT. ONE SHOT CAN PIERCE THE FUEL TANK AND IGNITE IT, IN WHICH CASE THE WHOLE CREW BURNS TO DEATH. MOST IMPORTANT THOUGH IS TO KEEP A COOL HEAD AS YOU NEED TO AIM WELL TO ACHIEVE A GOOD HIT."**

**Lt. Hermann Schmidt, IR 465**

accounts, it was Unteroffizier Theodor Krüger who was finally, in 1929, named by the Germans as the hero in question. Yet this decision was not generally accepted. Both in Britain and in Germany, the discussion over the existence and identity of the mystery German soldier continued until the mid-1940s and was one of the main reasons why the volume on Cambrai was the last of the official British Histories of the Great War to be published, in 1948.

Eventually, it was the National Socialists that ensured that a monument to Krüger, the Ehrenmal der deutschen Feldartillerie, was dedicated and erected to the memory of the German Artillery arm in Cologne shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. Today we can confidently say that there was no German gunner who destroyed 16 British tanks single-

handedly before being killed at his gun, yet the story is still accepted and widely circulated.

Only a day later, on 21 November, the German defence started to stiffen. Near Cantaing, the Kraftwagen-Geschütze – large calibre anti-aircraft guns mounted on lorries – were rushed into battle for the first time in the war, engaging British tanks at long range, then rushing away before being subjected to enemy retaliation. In Fontaine-Notre-Dame, German infantry fighting from the cover of buildings and alleyways succeeded in destroying a large number of British tanks using K-ammunition and bundled charges, while the bloody struggle for the village and wood of Bourlon signalled the end of successive tank attacks. Perhaps this meant that German defensive means were sufficient after all?

*Destroyed British tank in Notre-Dame-Fontaine*





## LESSONS FROM THE FRONT

### BATTLE EXPERIENCE WAS THE MAJOR FACTOR IN ANTI-TANK INNOVATIONS

The heavy blows that had been dealt by Allied tanks left no doubt that something needed to be done. The mass of orders issued at the front, however, were still useless. "Observation," "reconnaissance," "obstacle construction" and "stubborn resistance" could not make up for the lack of effective defensive weaponry.

The construction of obstacles required both stable defensive lines and time – two things unavailable to the Germans throughout the second half of 1918. In some areas, minefields were laid and tank traps were dug, but in general, these actions came too late.

Plans had been made, up to the spring of 1919, to issue 30,000 AT-rifles, 1,000 AT machine guns, smoke and AT hand grenades, plus 4,500 37mm cannon of various types. The infantry would also have access to 200 improved 2cm Becker guns and 22 newly

raised infantry gun batteries. Each pioneer company would have been issued with six extra flame throwers (that had performed superbly in previous engagements). Added to that, the design of an 18mm machine gun was ordered.

Yet the German soldiers facing masses of modern and effective tanks in the final months of the First World War had to defend themselves with the same makeshift means they had used at the Battle of the Somme, two years earlier. This time, however, they rarely had the protection of a well-entrenched position. On 7 November 1918, British flying columns supported by armoured cars harassed the German retreat and finally closed the storybook of German anti-tank responses during the First World War, which, while initially superior, had been rendered ineffective by the superiority and mass of Allied tanks.

*Two German soldiers posing with their 13mm Mauser Tankgewehr rifles and the rarely seen canvas ammunition pouches*

## TANK KILLERS OF WORLD WAR I

On 30 November, a masterful German counterstroke smashed into the worn-out troops of Byng's army. It was a major success of new German offensive tactics that not only recaptured the ground lost in the previous fighting, but also resulted in the capture of 10,000 prisoners, 716 machine guns, 148 artillery pieces and, most importantly, 100 tanks – vehicles that would be evaluated and, a few months later, see service against their former owners. German troops achieved all that without using tanks.

The counter-offensive had been a victory of superior tactics unleashed against a worn-out and spent foe, but this was more or less ignored. At Cambrai, the lesson was clear – German morale and tactics had triumphed over

British material, a major misconception that would have far-reaching consequences in the second half of the following year. Again German High Command ignored critical reports from its subordinates that could have been used well to draft new and effective defensive strategies. All focus was put on the successful second phase of the defensive struggle, instead of evaluating the real reasons for the initial failure of the German defences on 20 November.

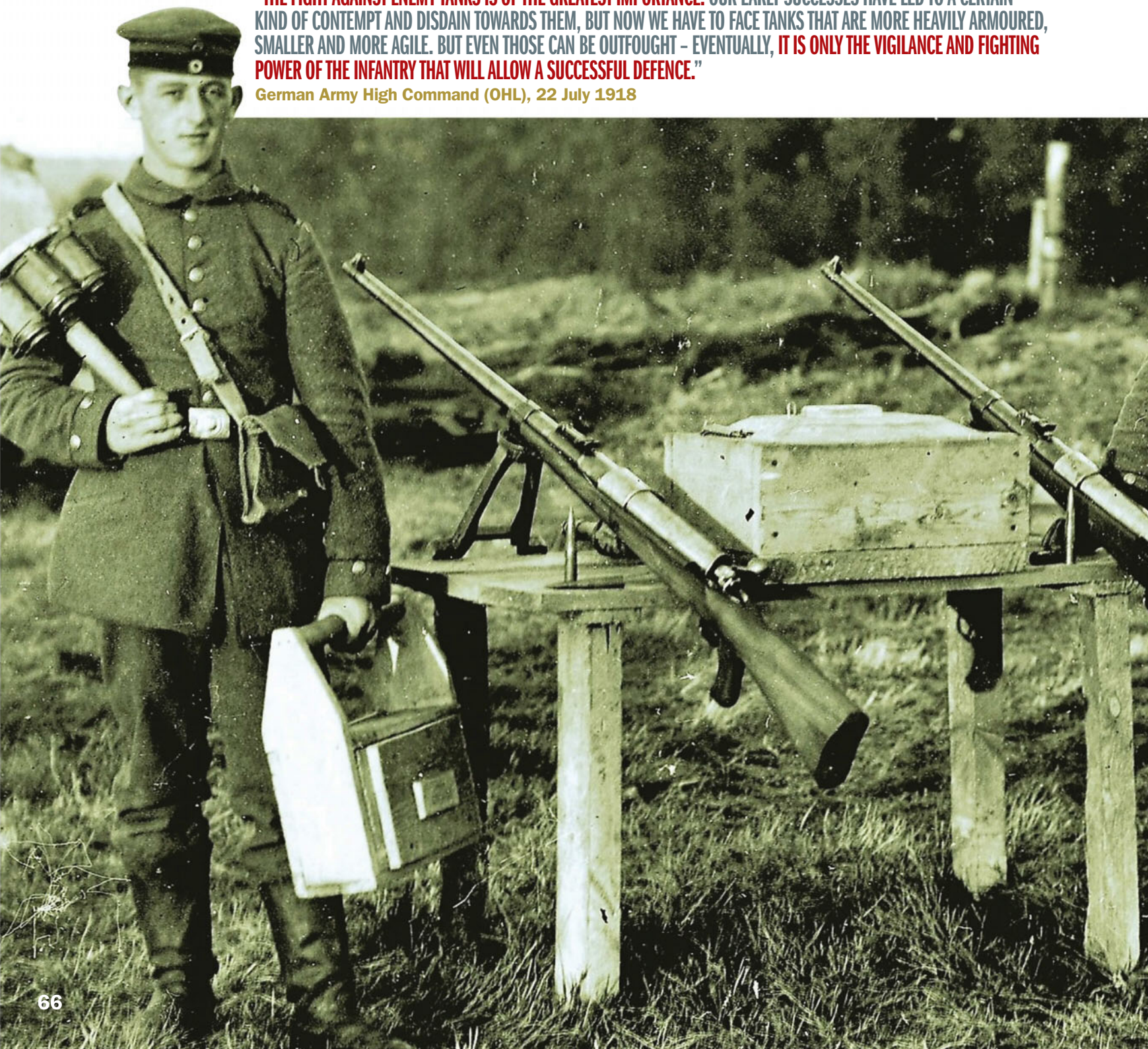
On 12 December, the 119th Infantry Division, which had only been thrown into the fray on 22 November, reported: "Infantry with hand grenades, K-bullets and light mine throwers has no need to fear even a large-scale tank attack." Even the Gruppe Chaudry, a formation that had been at the receiving end of the

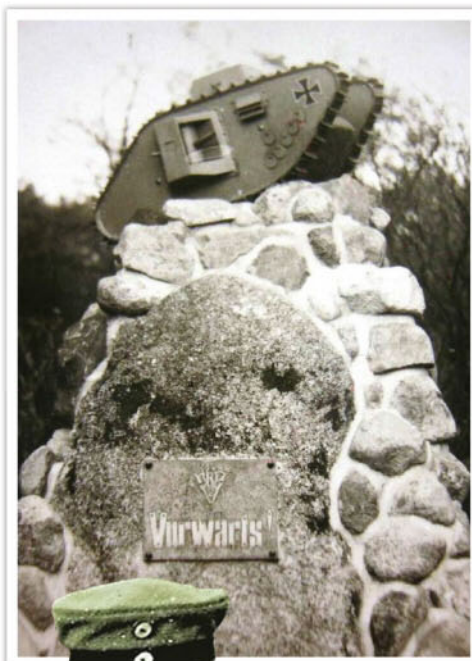
successful armoured British onslaught of 20 November, reported that the 119th Division "repeatedly and successfully faced and repelled numerous British tank attacks". Looking at this background, it doesn't come as a surprise that the German Army's perception of its anti-tank capabilities drifted further apart from reality with each successive day.

If the Allies were kept under proper observation and if the defensive doctrines were followed to the letter, nothing could go wrong. The lack of flexibility of masses of indirectly firing artillery against a quickly advancing mass attack of armour, as witnessed on 20 November, was just as overlooked as the fact that the existing anti-tank weaponry of the infantry was only

**"THE FIGHT AGAINST ENEMY TANKS IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE. OUR EARLY SUCCESSES HAVE LED TO A CERTAIN KIND OF CONTEMPT AND DISDAIN TOWARDS THEM, BUT NOW WE HAVE TO FACE TANKS THAT ARE MORE HEAVILY ARMoured, SMALLER AND MORE AGILE. BUT EVEN THOSE CAN BE OUTFOUGHT – EVENTUALLY, IT IS ONLY THE VIGILANCE AND FIGHTING POWER OF THE INFANTRY THAT WILL ALLOW A SUCCESSFUL DEFENCE."**

**German Army High Command (OHL), 22 July 1918**





sufficient to stall small-scale attacks. British success at Cambrai on 20 November had only been an episode and it would only need minor changes in doctrine and equipment to stabilise the front for future attacks. It was realised that K-bullets and the already planned 13mm anti-tank rifle alone were not effective enough and that a new machine gun in the same large calibre was needed.

In the future, tanks were to be met by dispersed 'nests' of infantry armed with K-ammunition, bundled charges and Minenwerfers on low trajectory cradles, instead of infantry waiting in rigid defensive lines. A mobile defensive reserve of motorised anti-tank guns was to be formed and kept in readiness, while rearward settlements were to be protected by permanently installed, Belgian-made 5.7cm guns equipped with new armour-piercing shells.

### 1918: material wins

When Germany launched its Spring Offensive on 21 March 1918, and assault troops swept across the terrain between Croisilles and La Fère, crushing Allied resistance wherever it was encountered, the Tankschrecken, the Tank Fear, seemed to be a thing of the past. The frenzied whirl of victory, glory and blood cast a pall over the mostly successful defensive operations of the Allied armour, which, even today, are often described as rather meaningless rearguard actions.

Yet the British tank attacks on 21 March, at Épehy and Doignies, on 22 March, near Roisel, Épehy and Vaulx-Vraucourt, and on 24 April, at Villers-Bretonneux, inflicted serious losses on the German assault troops, often pushing them back towards the positions of the foremost German artillery batteries. Only the use of massed German artillery laying down curtains of defensive fire and German ground attack aeroplanes managed to blunt these counter attacks.

Whenever attacking German infantry was caught up by British tanks, losses were severe, but again reports of these local fiascos failed to reach the OHL. German Army High Command remained blind to the fact that the infantry still lacked the means to effectively engage tanks in battle. On the other hand, local successes of German artillery against tanks, such as at Chaudon, on 31 May, and Matz, on 11 June, were highlighted and taken as proof that German defensive measures were able to cope with everything the Allies could field. Added to the lack of reports on Allied tank successes against German infantry came the grinding and time-consuming processes of German bureaucracy. On 1 June 1918, German troops captured the first of the new and revolutionary French light Renault FT-17 tanks. To those on the ground, it was clear that this new design was of major importance and so the tank was transported back to Avesnes for evaluation. The vehicle was tested and a detailed report was compiled, but failed to reach the OHL.

**Left:** German soldiers on an anti tank training course posing with a selection of the latest available weaponry – Mauser AT rifles, bundled charges and a selection of early anti-tank mines

**Inset top left:** Memorial of a German "Beute-Panzer" unit decorated with a Mark IV tank in German colours

## "THE REVERSAL OF FORTUNE THAT WAS INITIATED WHEN GENERAL MANGIN SET HIS TANKS INTO MOTION FROM THE FOREST OF VILLERS-COTTERÊTS, ON 18 JULY 1918, CAME AS A SURPRISE TO BOTH THE GERMAN TROOPS ON THE GROUND AND GERMAN HIGH COMMAND"

When the FT-17 was first used in large numbers, on 18 July 1918, it came as an utter and devastating surprise. Even then, when the power of the tank used en masse had been clearly visible to everyone on the battlefield, self-deceptive reports were still spread within the army. The 78th Reserve Division reported on 18 July: "Tanks only exert an influence on morale, both on that of the attacker and that of the defender. In general, their appearance is only owed to the decline of morale and nerves of the attacking troops. Soldiers of 1914 would not have needed tanks."

The reversal of fortune that was initiated when General Mangin set his tanks into motion from the forest of Villers-Cotterêts, on 18 July 1918, came as a surprise to both the German troops on the ground and German High Command. The French tank arm, which seemed to have had little influence during the previous offensive battles, had suddenly lunged out a mighty blow, aiming its thrust at German troops that had only just given their stocks of K-ammunition to "units defending more threatened sectors" of the front.

The lines had not been secured by state-of-the-art defensive works and fields of fire were limited. Even the cornfields in front of the German lines had not been cut down. Only in the last possible moment, when French tanks were already engaging the German artillery in the rear, did sufficient reserves of assault infantry and motorised artillery rush in, managing to push the attackers back. The same happened again on 8 August, near Amiens. While warnings from German frontline commanders were being dismissed as the hallucinatory fantasies of overly nervous combat troops, the Allies had been assembling for a major offensive operation.

When waves of enemy infantry and tanks finally attacked, they were met by German defenders who were totally unprepared. The infantry hadn't been supplied with sufficient anti-tank weaponry, while the German artillery were rendered ineffective by fog and the speed of the Allied advance. Supported by 500 tanks and 2,000 planes, Allied troops swiftly advanced more than eight miles. The German Army, meanwhile, lost 30,000 men, with more than half of them becoming prisoners of war.



## Heroes of the Medal of Honor

# SAMMY L. DAVIS

At age 21, Private First Class Sammy L. Davis saved wounded comrades and survived an onslaught by enemy troops in South Vietnam, receiving the Medal of Honor for incredible valour

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

**D**uring the production of the 1994 Academy Award-winning film *Forrest Gump*, Sammy Davis received an interesting telephone call at his Illinois home. On the other end of the line was a representative of the Pentagon.

The caller informed Sammy that the film company wanted to use still photos and archival footage of the 1968 ceremony in which President Lyndon B. Johnson presented Davis and four other American soldiers with the nation's highest award for valour in combat, the Medal of Honor. "They were telling me, not asking," Sammy smiled. "When you receive the Medal of Honor you kind of become public domain."

The footage of the ceremony was used in the hit film – with the head of Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks superimposed on Sammy's body. "It was interesting to see that," related Davis. "The military action in the movie is based on how I earned my Medal of Honor, when I was blown half out of my foxhole. That was how *Forrest Gump* was shot in the buttocks!"

Since the movie's debut, Sammy has been known as the 'real *Forrest Gump*', and he has come to cherish the association. On November 18, 1967, however, the instinct to survive, to help wounded comrades, and to beat back a tremendous attack by communist forces were foremost in his mind. Not even the numbing pain of severe wounds dissuaded him. The future, if he lived to see it, was minute by minute.

### CHOPPER INTO CHAOS

When Sammy graduated from high school in 1965, his class set off on a trip to New York City. He didn't join his classmates, though. He headed for the recruiting station and joined the U.S. Army. Within months, he was assigned to Battery C, 4th Artillery, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Division and, like many other young soldiers, found himself deployed to Vietnam. At the time, Southeast Asia was the flashpoint

*Below: Bare-chested Private First Class Sammy L. Davis poses in South Vietnam with a 105mm howitzer in the background*



for armed conflict between the U.S. backed pro-Western South Vietnamese government and the communist regime of North Vietnam, which supported the Viet Cong guerrilla insurgency that was a constant and often unseen enemy in the field.

Well trained in the capabilities and operations of the 105mm howitzer and the basic small arms that were standard issue in the U.S. Army, Sammy and his battery mates were given the mission of providing artillery support for an infantry offensive against an incursion of North Vietnamese troops and Viet Cong guerrillas infiltrating into South Vietnam from the neighbouring countries of Cambodia and Laos. The 105mm howitzer was a workhorse of American and South Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. While it was light enough for theatre tactical transport, it packed a serious punch, capable of throwing a 105mm (4.1-inch) shell weighing 19.08 kilograms (42.06 pounds) a distance of 11,270 metres (7 miles).

On the morning of November 17, 1967, the men of Battery C boarded twin-rotored Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters for the ride to the combat zone in an area known as the Plain of Reeds. Every inch of space in the big choppers was crammed full of 105mm ammunition. The howitzers were suspended in slings below the choppers' bellies and swayed with the wind and changes in direction. Soldiers of the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment were to serve as support once the artillerymen were on the ground.

“THEY FIRED ROCKETS AT US FROM  
ACROSS THE RIVER. YOU NAME  
IT, THEY HAD IT. IF THEY WEREN'T  
HARDCORE, I DON'T WANT TO  
MESS WITH ANYTHING HARDER”

Staff Sergeant William Chandler, 5th  
Battalion, 60th Infantry at Cai Lay

*During one of his many  
speaking engagements,  
retired U.S. Army  
Sergeant First Class  
Sammy L. Davis touches  
his Medal of Honor*



## MEDAL OF HONOR HERO

“They picked us up at 6 a.m., and we flew for an hour and a half or so,” Davis remembered, “and then started to come down a little lower. They set us down in an open spot in the jungle along the banks of the Mekong River, all four of our guns together, and it became Fire Support Base Cudgel.”

The gunners set their quartet of howitzers immediately after landing and began firing in support of hard-pressed infantrymen already locked in close combat with the enemy, which may have been North Vietnamese Army regulars or Viet Cong. Davis isn't sure to this day as to the composition of the opposing force. “Official records say there were about 1,500 Viet Cong,” he advised, “but the enemy I fought with that night had on North Vietnamese uniforms, and at least 10 of them had on Chinese uniforms. As soon as we untethered the howitzers from the Chinooks, we started firing. Our infantrymen

were literally crying for artillery support. They were getting hit really hard. We laid our gun as quickly as we could and fired as fast as we could unload the ammo from the boxes. We fired all day without stopping. Each gun probably fired close to 1,000 rounds. I don't know the record, but that is a lot for a 105mm howitzer.”

Official records indicate that the Americans were up against at least three companies of the 261st Viet Cong Main Force Battalion, a reinforced heavy weapons battalion. In the late afternoon following the intense session of bombardment, the gunners ceased firing and went to work on establishing their perimeter on the banks of the river and close to the village of Cai Lay. Within hours, Fire Support Base Cudgel was at least temporarily secured.

“A Huey (Bell UH-1 helicopter) came in that afternoon before dark, and a major climbed out and gathered 42 of us kids around there and said

**“IGNORING REPEATED WARNINGS TO SEEK COVER, SGT. DAVIS RAMMED A SHELL INTO THE GUN. DISREGARDING A WITHERING HAIL OF ENEMY FIRE DIRECTED AGAINST HIS POSITION, HE AIMED AND FIRED THE HOWITZER...”**

**Medal of Honor Citation**



*Sergeant Sammy L. Davis stands at centre among soldiers receiving the Medal of Honor from President Lyndon B. Johnson*

that the probability of us getting hit that night was 100 per cent," recalled Sammy. "We thought what he meant was that a few mortar rounds and some small-arms fire would come in after dark and that would be it. That happened a couple of times a week, but we had never been involved in an attack that was intended to overrun us. That had not happened in Vietnam to my knowledge, so we thought, 'What's the big deal?'"

**RAIN OF STEEL**

They were wrong. Previous experience was nothing like the attack that was to come. In the pre-dawn hours of the next day, Private First Class Sammy Davis and the rest of Battery C were fighting for their lives.

"At 2 a.m., we started getting mortared," he remembered, "and they were raining down. The average enemy mortar attack was three to five rounds with 10 being about the maximum.

But this one... Wow, it was heavy! At exactly 2:30, they stopped. There was a strange, eerie silence. My gun was right on the riverbank, and from across the river we could hear people yelling, 'Tonight you die GI!' We could see 150 to 200 people formed up to make a mass assault."

To defend against the attack, the howitzers were loaded with anti-personnel rounds called 'beehive'. Each shell contained 18,000 small flechettes, or darts, that essentially turned the 105mm howitzer into a giant shotgun. Davis crouched and tried to take cover behind the protective shield on the gun carriage. "We couldn't fire until we got confirmation that our infantry had withdrawn into our perimeter," he explained. "Finally, we got the command to fire. I pulled the lanyard, and the piece went off. The enemy had set up rockets and fired at my muzzle blast. They fired

a 57mm recoilless rifle round that hit the gun shield and blew me away from the howitzer. Part of that round hit my sergeant, James Gant, in the chest, and it blew me half out of my foxhole."

When the other artillerymen of Sammy's unit saw his gun erupt in smoke and flame, one howitzer fired a beehive round at several enemy soldiers trying to turn the disabled gun around on the Americans. Sammy was hit by friendly fire from that discharge.

"They thought all of us were dead," Davis shook his head. "My butt was sticking over the sandbags, and that is how 'Forrest' got shot in the buttocks. I got 30 darts from my thighs to my fourth lumbar vertebra, also in one kidney."

Although he was seriously wounded and probably suffering from a concussion, the shock of that friendly shell shook Davis out of semi-consciousness. "The beehive woke me up," he continued,

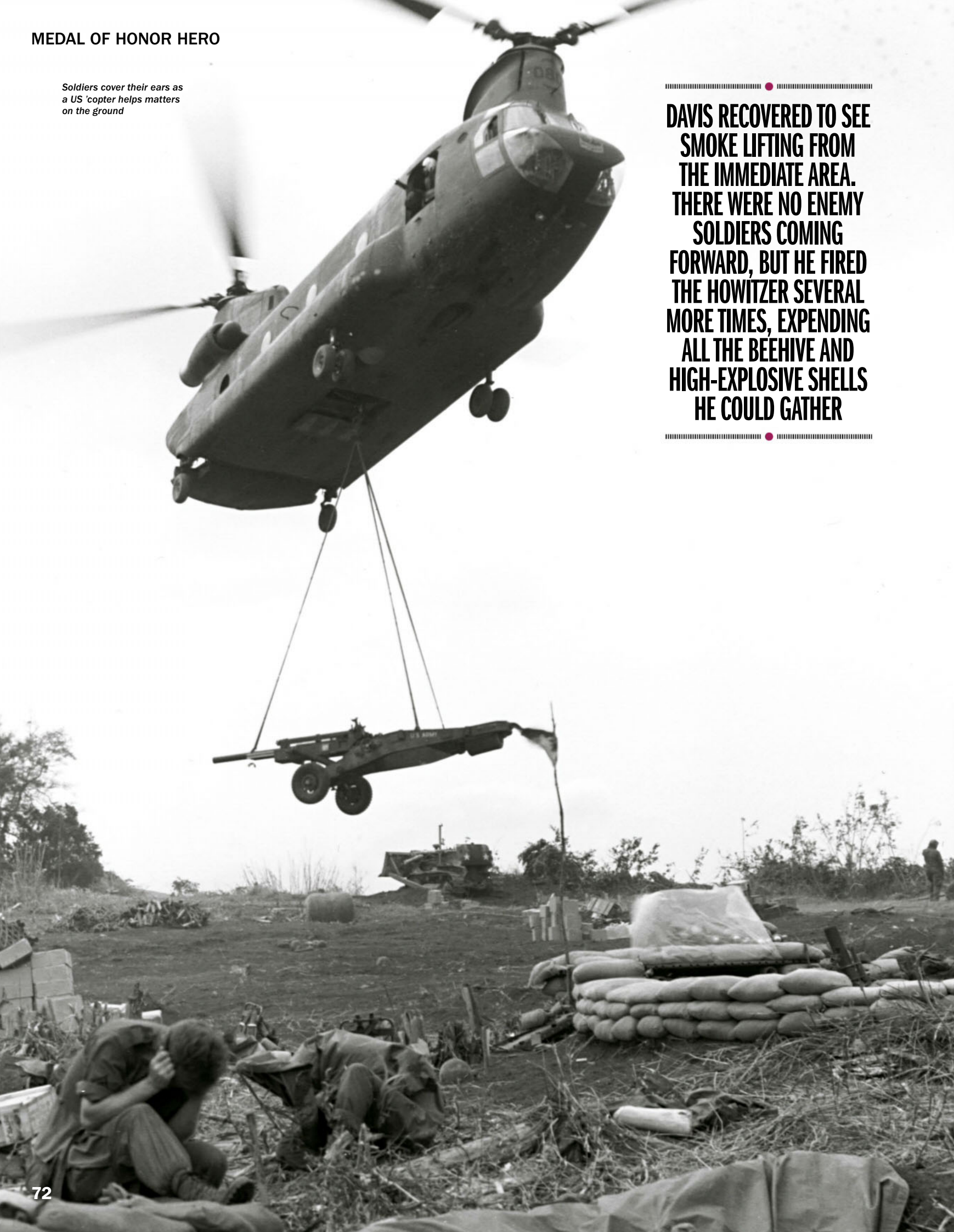


*Medal of Honor recipient Sammy L. Davis wears the medal at his throat during a ceremony commemorating his service*

## MEDAL OF HONOR HERO

*Soldiers cover their ears as a US 'copter helps matters on the ground*

**DAVIS RECOVERED TO SEE SMOKE LIFTING FROM THE IMMEDIATE AREA. THERE WERE NO ENEMY SOLDIERS COMING FORWARD, BUT HE FIRED THE HOWITZER SEVERAL MORE TIMES, EXPENDING ALL THE BEEHIVE AND HIGH-EXPLOSIVE SHELLS HE COULD GATHER**





“and some of the guys said later that they saw me kind of convulse. I remember being in the bottom of that foxhole. I could see tracer fire above me. Their lights were pretty, and it was November, so I thought about Christmas. I had laid there probably 15 or 20 minutes, and then I remember hearing a rat-tat-tat, and it seemed to be getting closer.”

Despite his wounds, a re-energised Davis grabbed his M-16 rifle and the 12 ammunition clips, 180 rounds, lying nearby. The surging enemy soldiers were crossing the river and climbing up the bank. After expending all the M-16 rounds, he looked for another weapon and remembered that Private Martin Hart had posted a 7.62mm M-60 machine gun in the next foxhole. He crawled over and found the weapon along with a box of 1,000 rounds and began firing once again.

“As those men came up the riverbank, I did my job as a soldier,” Davis offered. “The traumatic brain injury I had made it feel like a dream. I know now that it was always a different guy, but it looked like the same enemy soldier getting up again and again after falling in the water. I felt like a soldier in hell.”

When he ran out of M-60 ammunition, enemy soldiers were still coming up the riverbank. Davis looked over at his disabled howitzer and believed that he was the only American left alive in the vicinity. He scrounged around to find the components of another beehive round and remembered that Sergeant Gant had told his crew that to be effective the beehive had to be assembled with seven bags of powder in each canister before firing. Most of the bags had been ripped open by shrapnel and bullets, so Davis shovelled powder in by the handful. He loaded the gun tube, but there were no operational mechanisms to traverse the weapon. Sammy simply lifted the battered howitzer and rotated it toward the enemy.

Lying in a pool of water with only his nose above, Davis waited a moment. “When they started over the bank again, the gun went pop,” he said, “and then momentarily it shook up and down and then went off with the wet powder

## “I LOVE HIM LIKE A BROTHER. WE’RE VIETNAM VETERANS. COMBAT VETERANS. HE SAVED MY LIFE”

Army demolition engineer Jim Deister after seeing Davis at a 1988 Vietnam Veterans’ reunion

inside. Later, at the artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, it was estimated that I had loaded the weapon with a ‘charge 20’, when a ‘charge 7’ is the maximum for a perfectly working 105. When the howitzer fell back down after firing, it landed on me and completely broke my back and crushed the ribs on my right side.”

### ACROSS THE RIVER AND BACK

Incredibly, Davis recovered to see smoke lifting from the immediate area. There were no enemy soldiers coming forward, but he fired the howitzer several more times, expending all the beehive and high-explosive shells he could gather. The last round he fired at the enemy was stuffed with propaganda leaflets.

Then, across the haze-shrouded river, Sammy saw movement. Specialist 4 Gwendell Holloway lay wounded on the other side. “In the light of a flare I saw a buddy and said, ‘I’ve got to get him’,” he remembered. “He had a hole in his head I could lay two fingers in and was shot in the back and had shrapnel wounds.”

Unable to swim, Davis used an inflatable air mattress to paddle to the other side of the river, where he found two other wounded soldiers. “I saw Jim Deister. He had been shot through the ear, and he did indeed live. Billy Ray Crawford had lost his left leg. Gwendell had put a tourniquet on him. They said the North Vietnamese had shot into their foxhole. By that time, I had taken a round from an

AK-47 in the thigh. I asked the Lord for the strength to carry all three of them,” he sighed. “We headed back toward the river and could hear the enemy. I watched them run across in front of us, and when one of them saw me, I would do my job as they went past us. Then I used a rifle (Holloway’s M-16) as a club. I took Jim across first and went back and got Billy Ray and Gwendell.”

Miraculously, all four men survived the fierce fight, as did Sergeant Gant, patched up with a first aid kit and later evacuated. Davis refused medical treatment ahead of other wounded men.

“The enemy broke contact at 8 in the morning,” Sammy recalled, “and by 9 we had helicopter dustoffs. Out of the 42 guys we had up there, 12 were still standing, including myself. My guys loaded me on a helicopter, and I woke up later at Camp Zama, Japan, near Tokyo.”

Sometime after he departed, several of Sammy’s comrades signed affidavits that supported a recommendation for the Medal of Honor. He was notified that the medal would be presented by President Johnson, and in an unusual gesture was allowed to return to his combat unit for a short period of time under a direct order from General William Westmoreland, commander of American troops in Southeast Asia.

On 19 November 1968, a year and a day after the fight near Cai Lay, Davis was one of five soldiers who received the Medal of Honor at the White House in Washington, D.C. “The president stepped into a little room to talk to us before the ceremony,” he remembered. “I think he knew we were a little nervous. He talked with each one of us individually, and we talked about catching fish and eating crawdads. I was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and he gave me a card and said, ‘Son, I have a ranch not far from there. Come down and see me.’ I got to go to the ranch three or four times. The president was never there, but his wife, Lady Bird, was. She treated me like a mama would.”

Following his discharge from active duty, Sammy remained in the National Guard with the 682nd Combat Engineer Battalion from Lawrenceville, Illinois, until his retirement in 1984. He remains a busy man, travelling with his wife, Dixie, at least 200 days a year, speaking to troops in global hotspots such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and South Korea. He is also pleased to present his thoughts on patriotism and the cost of freedom to school and civic groups across the United States. He leaves his audiences with the motto, “You don’t lose, till you quit trying!”

Sammy reflected, “It is always a privilege to sit and sign photos and talk to people, and I particularly enjoy meeting school children and talking with them. It is part of the obligation I hold and part of my job as a Medal of Honor recipient. Although my name is on the back of the medal, it doesn’t mean it belongs to me. I am only the caretaker.”

Now past his 70th birthday, Davis has returned to the overgrown battlefield at Cai Lay. He has reunited with old comrades and eaten cordial dinners with former enemies as an ambassador of goodwill half a century after that desperate night in 1967. He intends to continue travelling, speaking and paying tribute to those lost as long as he is able.



The village of Cai Lay, Tien Giang Province, Vietnam, near the scene of the desperate battle in November 1967, is quiet today

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WORDS TOM GARNER

## THE SIEGE OF

# JADOTVILLE



## PART I: THE TEENAGE PEACEKEEPER

In the first of three interviews with surviving veterans, John Gorman reveals how 156 Irish UN troops fought a heroic defence against the odds in the Congo



*Right: Private John Gorman in battle dress in Elisabethville, December 1961. At just 17 years of age, Gorman was one of the youngest soldiers in A Company, 35th Battalion*

*Upon arrival at Jadotville, soldiers of A Company burned the high grass near their billets to deny cover for encroaching infantry and to give a field of fire for the UN troops*

**I**t is the morning of Wednesday, 13 September 1961, and a handful of Irish UN soldiers are assembling for their daily church service in a mining town in central Africa. Although many have never left Ireland before, they have arrived in the newly established Republic of the Congo to prevent the country from descending further into a bitter civil war.

The Irish Army personnel of 'A' Company, 35th Battalion are inexperienced, but they are about to receive a rude awakening. The mining town is in the heart of rebel territory in the breakaway state of Katanga and 156 Irishmen are surrounded by thousands of unfriendly inhabitants, armed militias and formidable mercenaries. As the Mass is held, hostile forces in trucks fire shots at the compound. Within a few hours, a full-scale siege is underway.

The mining town in question is a place that has been controversial ever since: Jadotville. The siege that took place here was borne out of extremely complex political circumstances and concluded in cover-ups at the highest levels. Nevertheless, the actual facts about the five-day battle are remarkable. None of the 156 members of A Company were killed during the siege and the UN troops managed to inflict hundreds of casualties on their numerically superior enemy.

By any measure, this was a remarkable feat of arms. The soldiers, however, were effectively abandoned by the UN High Command and eventually forced to surrender. The troops subsequently received a cold reception when they were released from captivity. Both the Irish Army and the UN covered up the incident and veterans from Jadotville were unfairly made scapegoats for decades afterwards.

Nevertheless, one veteran called John Gorman decided to take matters into his own hands. Gorman had been a 17-year-old private in 1961, but later led the campaign to rehabilitate the men of Jadotville as the courageous soldiers that they truly were. Today, largely thanks to Gorman's efforts, the siege is now recognised as one of the most heroic and wrongfully forgotten stories in Irish military history. Gorman is still campaigning for his fellow veterans and tells a remarkable story of heroism, captivity, vilification and the long road to restored honour.

### An inexperienced force

Born in 1944, Gorman joined the Irish Army aged only 15, but by the time he heard about the growing crisis in the Congo, he was a fully trained and enthusiastic soldier. "I joined the army on 22 June 1959 and I went into my recruit training, which would have lasted about six months. Then you do a three-star course that makes you a fully qualified soldier and I was at home on leave when I heard about the Congo. I cancelled my leave – I didn't say why –

and went back to Athlone and volunteered for the Congo. At that time you would have had two or three volunteer battalions because everyone was so mad to get out there! I didn't get out until June 1961."

Fledgling peacekeepers like Gorman knew little of the political complexities before his deployment. "I was 17 years old at the time and knew absolutely nothing. The only thing I knew about Africa was bringing a penny into school for the babies out there and that was all."

Even the reasons for his deployment were not adequately explained. "We were not given any reasons really, just that there was trouble out there and we were going to sort it out."

Peacekeeping was a new concept in the early 1960s and, although Gorman was proud to serve in the UN, the Irish Army's inexperience and poor equipment was evident, "I did take pride in it, but we went out in really heavy Irish Army uniforms from WWII. We were issued out there with blue 'helmets', which were actually just the liners for the helmets and they just had 'UN' on them. We were all young lads and it was new to us in a huge way. We'd never seen anything like this before and for around 95 per cent of us, it would have been our first time even out of Ireland. The Yanks who flew us out there were laughing at our old uniforms and I saw them loading these Jeeps and armoured trucks into the belly of the plane. I thought, 'How in God's name is this going to get off the ground?' But eventually we did."

### Deployment to the Congo

The Congo is approximately the size of Western Europe and it was impossible for the UN's force of around 20,000 men to cover all areas of conflict in secessionist Katanga, let alone the entire country. They also faced formidable opposition from Katanga's breakaway security force, known as the "gendarmierie", which was a militia made up of local tribesmen and commanded by white mercenaries.

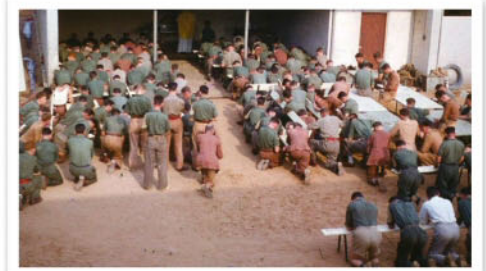
Nicknamed "mercs" by the Irish, the formidable mercenaries were primarily Belgian and French officers and NCOs within the gendarmerie who were battle-hardened veterans of WWII and colonial conflicts. The native population ominously referred to them as "les affreux" ("the terrors").

The gendarmeries were headquartered at the Katangan capital of Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) but Gorman recalls that the UN had no problem from the local population. "The ordinary population were fairly OK, but it was the mercenaries and their friends in the gendarmerie that were the problem. As you can imagine, the mercenaries restrained the gendarmerie pretty well because they were top soldiers – otherwise they wouldn't have been out there."

A Company was soon kept busy. "There were a few operations carried out before we went to Jadotville. Operation Rum Punch was the



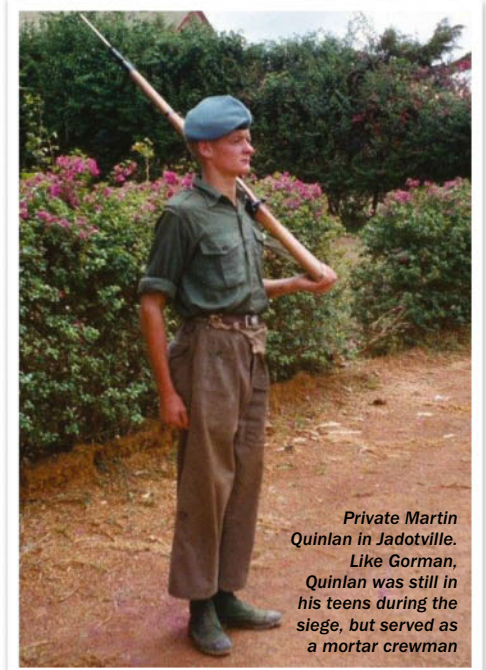
**Above:** Commandant Pat Quinlan in Jadotville a few days before the siege began, in September 1961. He later wrote, "It is a pity that we, who never believed in the use of force, must suffer for the blunders of little dictators and stupid military leaders. We did not come here to shoot Africans, we came to help them... I was not prepared to let my men die for nothing"



**Above:** A Company at a morning Mass in Jadotville. The siege began on 17 September 1961, when mercenaries and gendarmeries attacked the Irish defences during a similar service



**Above:** Digging in at Jadotville. The construction of defensive trenches among thick bushes gave essential cover for the soldiers of A Company during the siege



**Private Martin Quinlan in Jadotville. Like Gorman, Quinlan was still in his teens during the siege, but served as a mortar crewman**

**"WE TOOK GUIDANCE FROM THE OLDER PEOPLE AND SAW THAT THEY WEREN'T AFRAID, SO WE WEREN'T GOING TO BE AFRAID EITHER. IT WAS THEIR FIRST TIME AS WELL, BUT THEIR LEADERSHIP WAS JUST EXCELLENT"**



*Private Butch McManus aiming an 88 mm Carl Gustaf recoilless rifle. This portable anti-tank gun was one of the heaviest weapons in A Company's arsenal*

taking over of the gendarmerie headquarters in Elisabethville. We took that over on an August morning at 4am. Our task was to get in, take it over and let no word get out to the mercenaries. We were aiming to capture them all and we did.”

Hundreds of mercenaries had been captured but the UN Special Representative in the Congo, Conor Cruise O'Brien (who by coincidence was also an Irishman) was persuaded by Belgian diplomats to release them. The situation was not properly explained to A Company and Gorman believes it created later problems. “The operation went very well and we then took the airport in Elisabethville. I didn't think the mercenaries were going to leave but there was some dispute with O'Brien about letting them go again. If they did leave, they were back in action twice as quick to start what ended up being the battle at Jadotville.”

### **Gunfire at Mass**

After Operation Rum Punch, A Company's next assignment was a posting to Jadotville (now Likasi), which was 80 miles north of Elisabethville. Their task was to protect the white settlers there from a potential massacre, but circumstances suggested otherwise. Jadotville was a thriving copper mining town whose population composed of native miners and a substantial white community of engineers and merchants. Both communities were broadly in support of Katangan independence, while

the white population in particular sought to preserve their commercial interests.

Consequently, the UN was unwelcome, as Gorman explains. “We were dug in around the airport in Elisabethville and two companies had gone into Jadotville: a Swedish company and the Irish B Company. They wanted to leave because of the hostility towards them so they were taken out. The Swedes left first and then B Company left. We actually saw some members of B Company coming out when we were on our way in and they were waving at us. Little did we know the trouble we were going to walk into!”

The Irish had been given little transport and were forced to leave some of their ammunition and supplies behind as they drove into Jadotville, “We were underequipped and unprepared. Everything we had was WWII equipment except the FN rifles. We went to the Congo with Lee Enfield .303 rifles and issued with FN rifles out there. That's all we had: a few anti-tank guns, one or two 60mm mortars and Bren and Vickers guns.”

The commander of A Company, Commandant Patrick 'Pat' Quinlan, immediately recognised the hostile situation and equipment shortage. He ordered his men to dig trenches at night around their encampment on the outskirts of Jadotville. “The mercenaries were patrolling every hour past our camp and I remember our company commander saying to us, ‘Just act normal, as if you're sitting out in the sun.’

We dug our trenches at night so they did not know that we had any positions [prepared].”

Gorman remembers that the Irish defence at Jadotville was efficient. “There were only 156 of us in total, but we were so well organised and dug in. All the trenches were five-foot deep and some had a little step-up in them so that you could step up a bit higher. We were very well prepared for a bunch of young Irish lads that had never been out of the country before – it was just amazing.”

On Wednesday, 13 September 1961, the majority of A Company was attending a church service when shots rang out. “We were at Mass at about 7.30am when three small horse wagon trucks came up the road and just swung into the camp as if they would take it over. But (Sergeant) John Monaghan wasn't at Mass. He was shaving and came out with a towel around his neck. When he saw what was happening he jumped into the Vickers machine gun trench and fired three or four bursts over their heads. They turned their trucks around and got out of there damn quick, but then a couple of hours later all hell broke loose.” It was the beginning of five days of intense combat.

### **Besieged but brilliantly led**

Unknown to A Company, the sudden gendarmerie attack had been provoked by a major UN operation that morning called 'Operation Morthor'. UN units had been instructed to take over Katanga and reunite it with the rest of the Congo, but the action provoked the Katangans into open warfare.

Astonishingly, Quinlan was unaware of Morthor's existence, as Gorman recalls, “We were going into Jadotville as part of Operation Morthor, but our company commander didn't

**“QUINLAN PROMISED THE FAMILIES WHEN WE WERE GOING OUT THAT HE WOULD BRING EVERY MAN HOME, AND HE DID. HE WAS JUST AN OUTSTANDING GUY”**

# CRISIS IN THE CONGO

THE FIGHTING AT JADOTVILLE WAS THE BLOODY RESULT OF EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND DANGEROUS GEOPOLITICAL PROBLEMS WITHIN BELGIUM'S FORMER COLONY

The early 1960s were one of the most dangerous periods of the Cold War, when the world was teetering on the edge of catastrophe. In 1961 alone, construction began on the Berlin Wall and the Bay of Pigs Invasion accelerated the tensions that would manifest into the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year. However, an equally dangerous situation had developed in the Congo, which had global ramifications.

In 1960, the Belgian Congo became an independent republic, but the new country was immediately faced with civil war. The provinces of Katanga and South Kasai seceded with Belgian support and when violence erupted, the United Nations deployed peacekeepers – including two battalions of the Irish Army – to restore order.

The peacekeeping force was known as the 'Organisation des Nations Unies de Congo' (ONUC), but the UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld initially refused Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba's request to use them against the breakaway Katangans. Hammarskjöld wanted the ONUC to act as a quasi-police force that would integrate, rather than force, the Katangans to remain part of the Congo. Lumumba eventually turned to the

Soviet Union for assistance, but this led to his assassination in February 1961.

One of the men believed complicit in the assassination was Katanga leader Moïse Tshombe, who subsequently used Lumumba's Soviet associations to attempt to discredit the Congolese government. The UN was now involved in a dangerous situation, and its troops came under increasingly heavy attack. Nine Irish soldiers had already been killed in Katanga during the 'Niamba Ambush' in November 1960.

Katanga was a global source of minerals, including large quantities of diamonds, 10 per cent of the world's copper and 60 per cent of global cobalt supplies. Most worryingly for the UN, the province produced almost half of the metals needed for Western military equipment and was also the location of numerous uranium mines, which were crucial for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Such valuable resources meant that the Congo was now a battleground between the Cold War powers and the crisis would continue until 1965. Nevertheless, despite a subsequent dictatorship that lasted until the late 1990s, Katanga remained a part of the Congo.

*Below: Dag Hammarskjöld became the first UN Secretary-General to die in office when his aircraft crashed in controversial circumstances while en route to ceasefire negotiations in the Congo*

*Below: The interior of a factory in Jadotville. Katanga's breakaway independence was largely based on its vast mineral resources and the influence of the powerful Belgian mining company Union Minière*



*A Katangan gendarme in 1961. Just 156 Irish UN soldiers had to face thousands of these armed militiamen during the siege*

**“WHEN YOU SEE SOMEBODY GIVING YOU THE LAST RITES IN THE TRENCHES YOU THINK, ‘WELL, THIS IS IT’”**

know that he was part of it – the officers were told not to tell him. He discovered five minutes before the trouble broke out. Just five minutes – it's not long.”

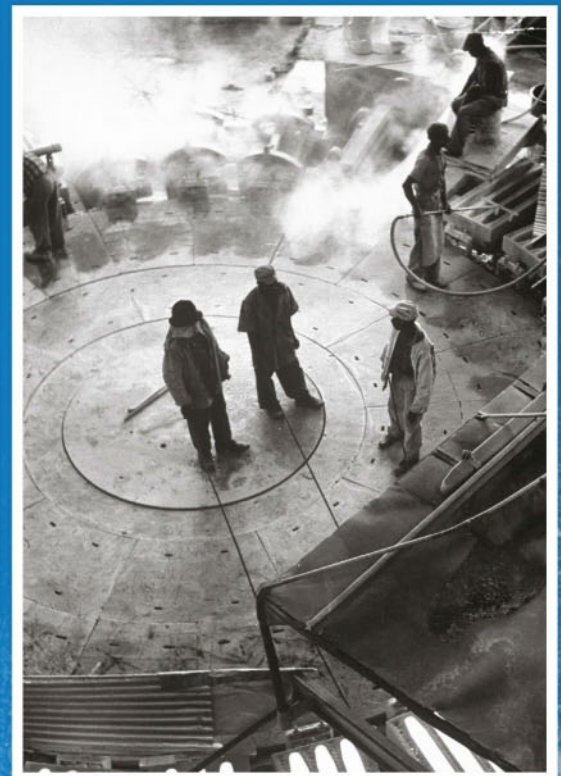
A Company was now surrounded by 2,000 to 4,000 mercenaries and gendarmeries, while many white townspeople also assisted the attack. Heavy fighting broke out from 11.30am with the Katangans deploying mortars and machine guns. It was Gorman's first experience of intense combat, but he was confident in his superiors. “We had great men. I always say to people, ‘When you're young, you don't know fear as older people would.’ You couldn't see the fear that you now see through older eyes, but we had great leadership. I must say our company commander, the late Commandant Pat Quinlan, was an absolutely outstanding man. We also had a company sergeant Jack Prendergast who was straight as a die but my God was he a good soldier. He was a star.”

Their confidence inspired the young soldiers. “We took guidance from the older people and saw that they weren't afraid so we weren't going to be afraid either. It was their first time as well, but their leadership was just excellent. I couldn't describe it any other way and I still think everyday just how they did it so successfully.”

With few resources to hand, Quinlan's plan was to break up enemy attacks at long range before they reached the thick bushes that surrounded the UN trenches. He was assisted



*Above: Moïse Tshombe was a businessman turned ruthless politician who became president of secessionist Katanga and was complicit in the assassination of the Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba*



by able soldiers who manned the inadequate 60mm mortars. “We had great mortar men. We had a mortar sergeant who was reckoned to be one of the best mortar men in any army, so much so that we were calling him ‘Hawkeye!’”

Over the next few days Gorman fought a relentless battle in the trenches and relied heavily on his Bren gun. “I always found the Bren to be a great weapon because you could take down dozens of men in no time. With a rifle, it was automatic, but I found that the FN was better at single shots.”

The mercenaries, however, began using a Fouga Magister jet fighter to strafe the Irish trenches and drop bombs. “That was frightening. He used to hit us every morning and then go on to Elisabethville to hit the UN there. When he was coming back at night he would hit us as a last thing. He knew exactly where we were for the following morning but our company commander moved us down and we spent all night digging trenches. As soon as the jet came back the following morning, he hit exactly where he had the evening before, but we weren’t there.”

With minimal food, water and equipment, Gorman had little time to recuperate and his meals were meagre. “When nightfall came, our company sergeant Jack Prendergast would come round with a bucket and spoons. He’d give you one or two spoons and I remember him saying something to me that I’d never forget, ‘Well young Gorman, this is your first dish in a trench,’ which was true. That was the way we carried on for five days.”

The gendarmeries and mercenaries began taking heavy casualties and started using dirty tactics. “At one point, they asked for a ceasefire to pick up their dead and wounded and our company commander granted that. He said that the ceasefire would be for four hours, but as soon as they had their dead and wounded picked up, they started firing again so they broke the ceasefire.”

**“WE HAD GREAT LEADERSHIP. I MUST SAY OUR COMPANY COMMANDER, THE LATE COMMANDANT PAT QUINLAN, WAS AN ABSOLUTELY OUTSTANDING MAN”**

The fighting became so intense that Gorman thought he might not survive, “Our chaplain Joseph Fagan gave us the last rites in the trenches, so that was a bit scary because you’re not expected to survive. He was a lovely man, but when you see somebody giving you the last rites in the trenches you think, ‘Well, this is it.’ But thankfully it wasn’t.”

### **A reluctant ceasefire**

After days of fighting, A Company was running extremely low on supplies and ammunition. Quinlan had consistently radioed for help and reinforcements but the two UN columns sent to relieve A Company were numerically insufficient and were beaten back across the strategically important bridge at Lufira. The second column of Irish, Indian Gurkha and Swedish troops had to fight their way back to Elisabethville and five Gurkhas were killed. Additionally, only one UN helicopter had been able to land among the garrison with water supplies, but the water was undrinkable thanks to the unwashed petrol cans they were transported in. A Company was now completely isolated and running out of time.

If he were to prevent any of his men’s lives being lost, Quinlan had no choice but to begin negotiations with the Katangans for joint patrols around Jadotville. However, after previous broken ceasefires, he was extremely cautious and received no support from his UN superiors. “When they didn’t get through our first defence, they looked for another ceasefire. Quinlan was wary of this and radioed the headquarters in Elisabethville. He was told there were ceasefire talks going on in Elisabethville and that they were going very well. It was as much to say, ‘Well if you don’t agree to this ceasefire and something happens here in Elisabethville, you’ll be to blame.’”

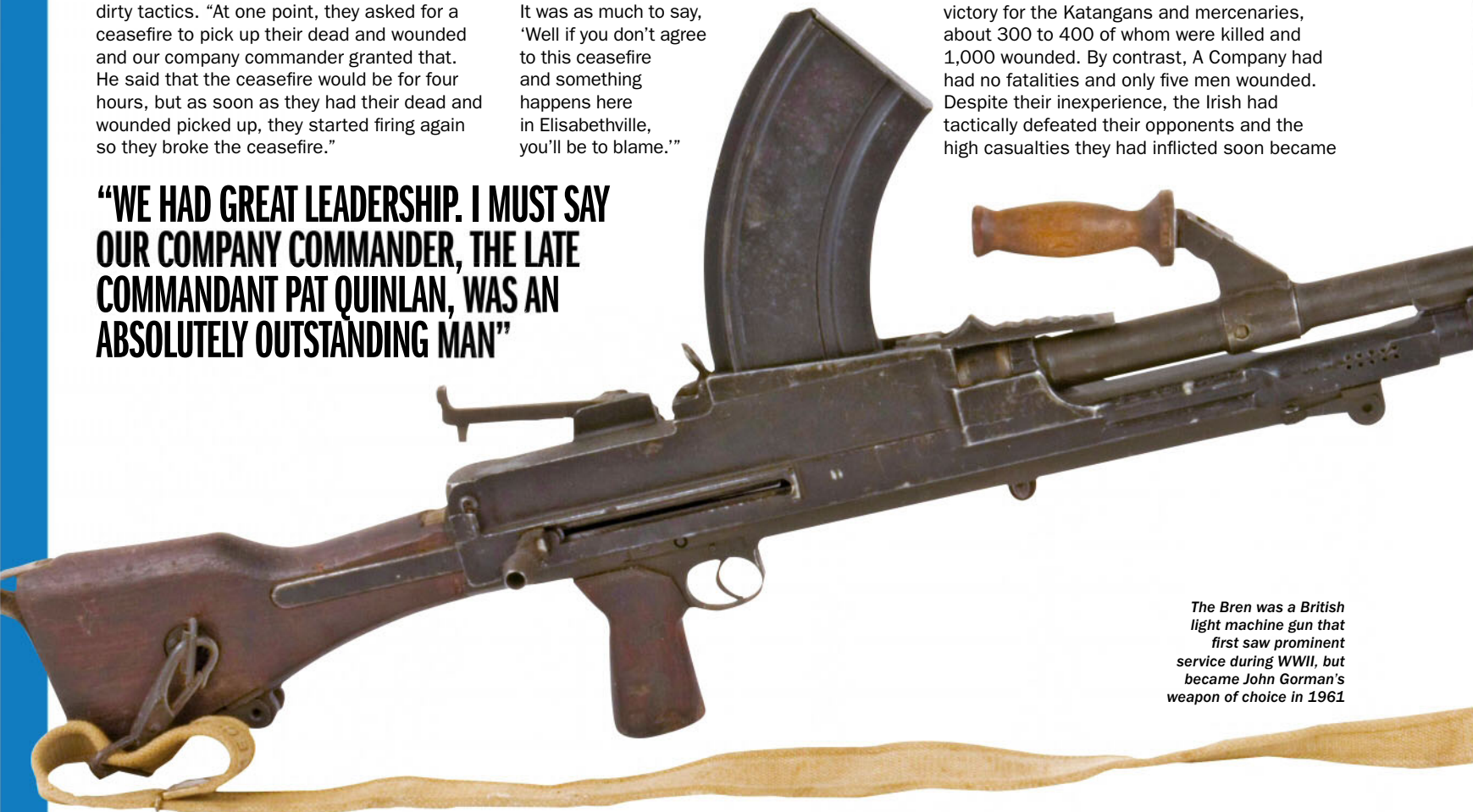
Godefroid Munongo, deputy to Katangan leader Moïse Tshombe, arrived at Jadotville and Gorman remembers the meeting. “We were out in the open and so were their lads. They probably had our positions taken over but Munongo came looking for our company commander and met him. I saw our commander just pacing up and down and Munongo told him he would have to surrender. That was during the ceasefire, which was against everything that the Geneva Convention ever stood for.”

With virtually no supplies left, a highly reluctant Quinlan agreed to a ceasefire on Sunday 17 September, but A Company would leave no weapons for the enemy. “We destroyed our heavy weapons such as the Bren guns and Vickers machine guns before we handed them in. We took the firing pins out and buried them.”

Quinlan was later severely criticised for his superiors for ‘surrendering’, an accusation that Gorman felt was entirely unjustified. “That was a laugh because it wasn’t a surrender. The way I looked at it then and today is that there was nothing more that Quinlan could have done unless he got us all killed and then he probably would have then been a ‘hero’. However, a British brigadier general later read the book *Siege At Jadotville* and said, ‘My God, if he was in our army he would be at the top rank and when he retired he would have been knighted’ Quinlan promised the families when we were going out that he would bring every man home, and he did. He was just an outstanding guy.”

### **An uneasy captivity**

The Siege of Jadotville had been a pyrrhic victory for the Katangans and mercenaries, about 300 to 400 of whom were killed and 1,000 wounded. By contrast, A Company had had no fatalities and only five men wounded. Despite their inexperience, the Irish had tactically defeated their opponents and the high casualties they had inflicted soon became



*The Bren was a British light machine gun that first saw prominent service during WWII, but became John Gorman’s weapon of choice in 1961*



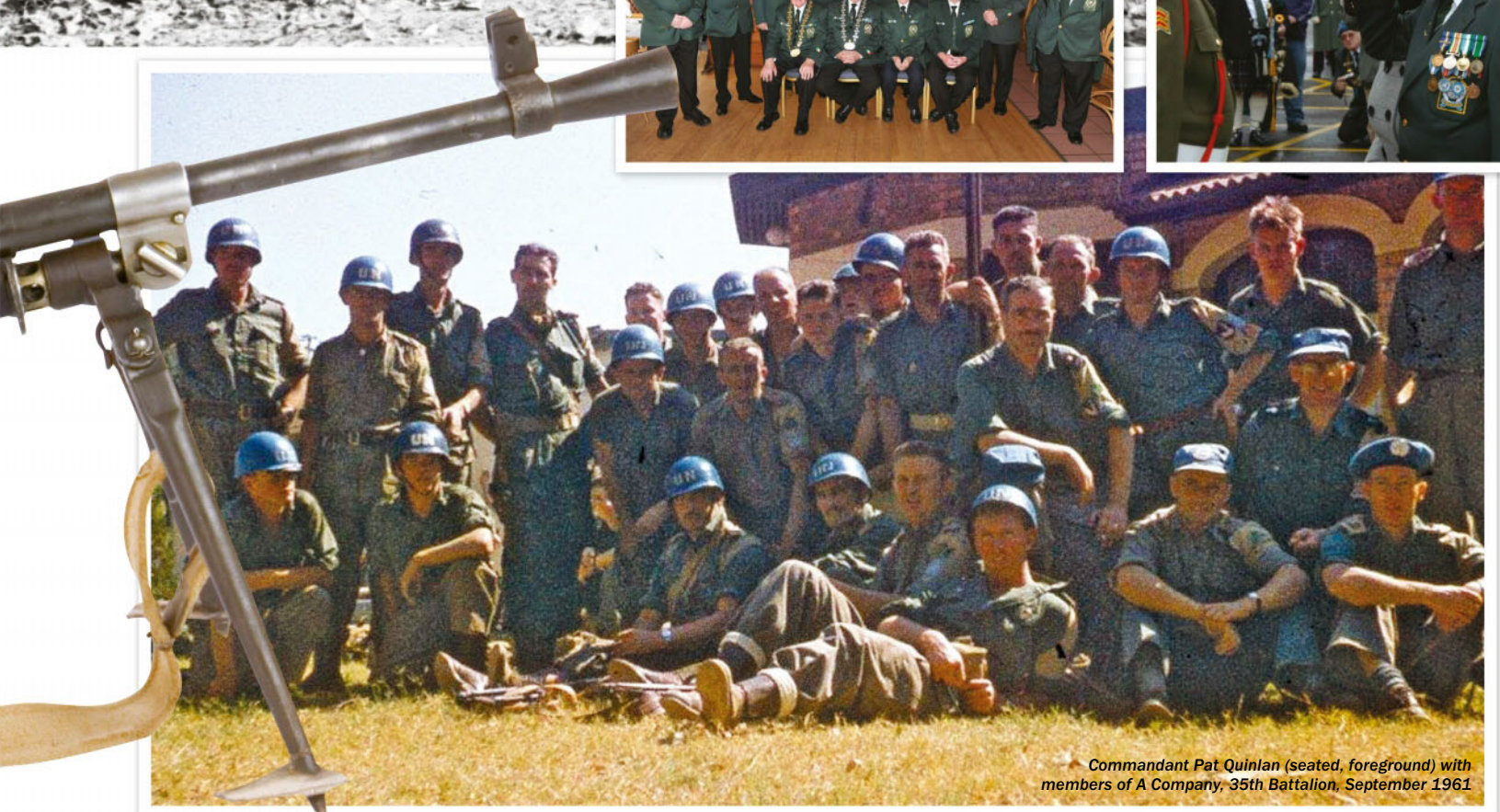
A Company were continually harassed and bombed by a Fouga Magister fighter jet that was flown by mercenary fighter pilot Jacques Delen

**“THERE WAS NOTHING MORE THAT QUINLAN COULD HAVE DONE UNLESS HE GOT US ALL KILLED”**



*Below: John Gorman (front row, seated, second from left) with other Irish UN veterans. Gorman has kept in touch with the majority of his fellow Jadotville veterans, despite many of them emigrating across the world*

*Below: John Gorman has tirelessly campaigned for the veterans of Jadotville for decades and is largely responsible for the raised awareness of A Company's bravery and subsequent mistreatment*



*Commandant Pat Quinlan (seated, foreground) with members of A Company, 35th Battalion, September 1961*

apparent when A Company was taken into captivity. "During our handover they brought us down to this little village where there were only women and children. They were all shouting, wailing and crying and making signs that they were going to cut our throats. It was only afterwards that we discovered that we had killed 70 per cent of their husbands."

A Company was held in captivity in a prison camp in Kolwezi until late October 1961, when they were released as part of a UN prisoner exchange. According to Gorman, Quinlan had even scared his opponents in captivity. "We were made to empty out our kitbags when a 9mm round came out of (Private) Jack Peppard's kitbag and the guard came round and hit him with a rifle. We were unarmed, of course, but our company commander ran straight for him, shook the shit out of him and said, 'You don't touch my men.' I think they were as much afraid of Quinlan armed or unarmed! They were always very wary of him."

### The campaign for justice

Although A Company initially received a warm reception when they returned to Ireland before Christmas 1961, the Irish Army soon hushed up the incident due to the perceived embarrassment of Quinlan's surrender. Veterans of the siege were subsequently given the derisive nickname of "Jadotville Jacks" within the army and the incompetence of the Irish and UN high command was covered up.

One of those that Gorman holds mainly responsible for the fiasco surrounding Jadotville is the UN representative Conor Cruise O'Brien, "He didn't come out of it very good at all. He was a civil servant and you never put a civil

**"SURELY IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TO STAND UP AND APOLOGISE AFTER ALL OF THIS? IF I DO SOMETHING WRONG TO SOMEBODY, I WILL GO AND APOLOGISE. THAT'S THE MANLY THING TO DO. BUT THEN, IS THERE A MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT?"**

servant in a military man's job in my opinion – he knew absolutely nothing about it. The UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld had read a few things that O'Brien had written and nominated him for the job. Hammarskjöld was a good man, but he was killed in a plane crash, which created more lies. His reason for going to the Congo was to see what went on in Jadotville and the Congo, and I believe to fire O'Brien as well. His death created more lies."

Gorman believes that O'Brien deliberately covered up his mistakes. "O'Brien later wrote a book called *To Katanga And Back*. He had nothing to be proud of at Jadotville and just brushed over it slightly once, that's all. He knew he couldn't be proud of what had happened."

The silence surrounding Jadotville continued for decades until Gorman decided to set the record straight. "Years had passed and I'd always promised myself that they can't get away with what they've done so I started a campaign. Everyone was telling me, 'You're mad, you're never going to get anywhere with this,' and that included a retired chief of staff, who said, 'You're making a fool out of yourself. You're never going to get anywhere with this Jadotville thing because it was so tightly covered up.' I said, 'Well, maybe not but you'll find that I will sort it out.' And I did, I did get places thank God."

By the early 2000s, Gorman's campaigning eventually came to the attention of the Irish minister of defence Willie O'Dea. "He phoned my house and asked me what went on in Jadotville and after we came home and I told him. I said, 'Is there anything more you'd like to know minister?' and he said, 'No, that's enough.' So I went and met him in Leinster House and discussed things with him. He was shocked that this was all covered up to save arses."

Thanks to Gorman's work, a government enquiry was commissioned in 2004 that cleared Quinlan and A Company of any charges of soldierly misconduct at Jadotville. Gorman had presented the veterans' case to the highest echelons of the UN. "I wrote to Kofi Annan. He was visiting Ireland, so I wrote a three-to-four-page letter and emailed it to him so that he would have it before he arrived. I do believe that he said in his speech to the taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, 'There is some unrest among your troops, would you put it right please?' It was a big comedown for the hierarchy here to have to bend and show that



they were wrong, because if they were right, there was no way that we would have been getting anything. But they weren't right, they were wrong."

Finally, in 2005, a commemorative stone for the soldiers of Jadotville was unveiled at Custume Barracks, Athlone and the veterans received a scroll for their service. Sadly, Quinlan did not live to see this public rehabilitation as he had died in 1997, but a portrait of him now hangs in the Congo Room at Curragh Camp. In 2016, Netflix released a feature film called *The Siege Of Jadotville* and there was another commemorative ceremony to formally recognise the soldiers' bravery at Custume Barracks.

Although Gorman is pleased with the attention that Jadotville is now receiving, the feelings are bittersweet. "Had they done the right thing, there would have been no campaign, no film, no books. There's been about seven



# IUNVA

## IRISH UNITED NATIONS VETERANS ASSOCIATION

The IUNVA is the association for serving and ex-service members of the Irish Defence Forces and Gardaí (Republic of Ireland Police Force). It is open to anyone from these organisations that has served at least 90 days service on a UN mission in a foreign country. The IUNVA's primary role is to provide support and events for members and their families who have been affected by overseas service.  
For more information visit: [www.iunva.ie](http://www.iunva.ie)

Images: Alamy, Getty, John Gorman, Joe Reilhan, Leo Quinlan, TopFoto



or eight books written during my campaign and there were a lot of television documentaries. The film brought it out more, even though we had the monument, scrolls, indication and recognition. It makes the world more aware because we have bought the rights to that film and it will be shown around the world."

In June 2017, the Irish government announced that a special medal would be awarded to the soldiers that fought at Jadotville, but Gorman wants no stone left unturned. "I actually said, 'I want to see the medal before it's struck and mostly I want to see what's going to be on it.' At this point in time we're not just going to take any old medal that would just satisfy them and not satisfy us. They're on the run now."

The veterans of Jadotville have come a long way since their frightening ordeal in 1961 and their subsequent mistreatment. Nevertheless,

Gorman is clear that more still needs to be done, not just for the now ageing band of surviving veterans, but also for their families, "A lot of the veterans were sickened by what happened and got very emotional about it, and some of them still are. The families of the deceased members also worry me because they should get an apology from the government for what was done. Their fathers and brothers went to their graves branded as cowards. Surely it's not too much to stand up and apologise after all of this? If I do something wrong to somebody, I will go and apologise. That's the manly thing to do. But then, is there a man in the government? For want of a better word, they're dead now and they should realise that."

As for A Company's conduct at Jadotville, it would take decades for the world to truly recognise their bravery, but one man certainly recognised their worth – Pat Quinlan. While in

**Above:** Moise Tshombe pictured with Commandant Pat Quinlan while A Company were in captivity, 2 October 1961. Quinlan used considerable negotiating skills to keep his imprisoned men safe from reprisals

captivity in October 1961, he wrote a glowing tribute to his soldiers' courage. "God, my men were fine... Ireland never reared better sons. They would have died to a man if I had decided to continue. They never wavered... No man ever got the loyalty I got from these boys. When things were darkest they were always smiling."

## IN PART II...

Noel Carey discusses his experiences serving as the youngest officer in A Company, 35th Battalion at Jadotville and the tactics used to survive the gruelling siege. Issue 47, on sale 5 October 2017.


# FV432

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

## ARMOURED PERSONNEL CARRIER



“THE FV432 ACCOMMODATES  
A CREW OF TWO WITH CAPACITY  
FOR TEN COMBAT LOADED INFANTRYMEN”



## The FV430 armoured fighting vehicle series has proven versatile in the service of the British Army for over half a century

**A**fter World War II, the British Army sought a tracked armoured personnel carrier that would in fact be its first such purpose-built vehicle. Success was not immediate, and numerous prototypes were considered before ultimately being disqualified. By the late 1950s, however, the Fighting Vehicle Development Division of contractor GKN Sankey, later BAE Systems Land Systems, delivered four prototype and 10 trial vehicles that had originated within its unarmoured FV420 Light Tracked Vehicle group for evaluation.

The Army's replacement for the Alvis FV603 Saracen wheeled armoured personnel carrier was accepted in 1962, and the first production vehicles in the new FV430 series, which included numerous variants, rolled off assembly lines the following year. The most prominent of these was the Saracen's successor, the FV432 armoured personnel carrier. Production continued until 1971, with approximately 3,000 examples of the FV432 being completed.

The FV432 accommodates a crew of two with capacity for ten combat loaded infantrymen. Notable variants include the FV433 Abbot self-propelled gun, which mounts a 105mm L13A1 gun in a fully traversing turret; the FV434 tracked maintenance carrier, with a crew of four and a hydraulic crane with a lifting capacity of 3,050 kilograms, or slightly more than three tonnes; the FV435 Wavell communications vehicle; the radar-equipped FV436 command and control vehicle; an ambulance version with a capacity of up to four stretchers; and the FV439 signals vehicle.

While numerous armoured vehicles have been planned as replacements for the FV432 and related models, particularly the FV510 Warrior, which made its debut in the early 1980s and did succeed it as the Army's primary troop carrier in 1988, the FV432 series has undergone several upgrades. As many as 1,500 still remain in service in support roles, as powerplant and armour revisions have kept the type operational for more than half a century.

### FV432 ARMOURD PERSONNEL CARRIER

**COMMISSIONED** 1963 **ORIGIN** UK  
**LENGTH** 17.23 FEET (5.25 METRES) **RANGE** 298 MILES (480 KILOMETRES) **WEIGHT** 16.8 TONS (15.3 TONNES)  
**ENGINE** ROLLS-ROYCE K60 6-CYLINDER MULTI-FUEL  
**CREW** PLUS 10 COMBAT TROOPS **PRIMARY WEAPON** 7.62MM L7 GENERAL PURPOSE MACHINE GUN

**“POWERPLANT AND ARMOUR REVISIONS HAVE KEPT THE TYPE OPERATIONAL FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY”**

*An FV432 careers around at the War and Peace Show, 2005*

The FV432 is capable of speeds of up to 33 miles per hour



**“THE PRIMARY POWERPLANT IS THE 240-HORSEPOWER ROLLS-ROYCE K60 MULTI-FUEL ENGINE”**

## ENGINE

While some FV432 models have been produced with petrol and diesel engines, the primary powerplant is the 240-horsepower Rolls-Royce K60 multi-fuel engine. Introduced in the early 1960s as a joint development project between Rolls-Royce and the Fighting Vehicle Research and Development Establishment of the War Office, the K60 was originally touted as the equivalent of a 168-horsepower diesel engine and drives the FV432 at a maximum road speed of 32.4 miles or 53.2 kilometres per hour paired with a TX-200-4A semi-automatic transmission. The opposed piston, twin crankshaft, two-stroke engine proved reliable in extremes of temperature and climate and was later engineered for use in commercial vehicles.



*A British carrier crosses the border into Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm*

## ARMAMENT

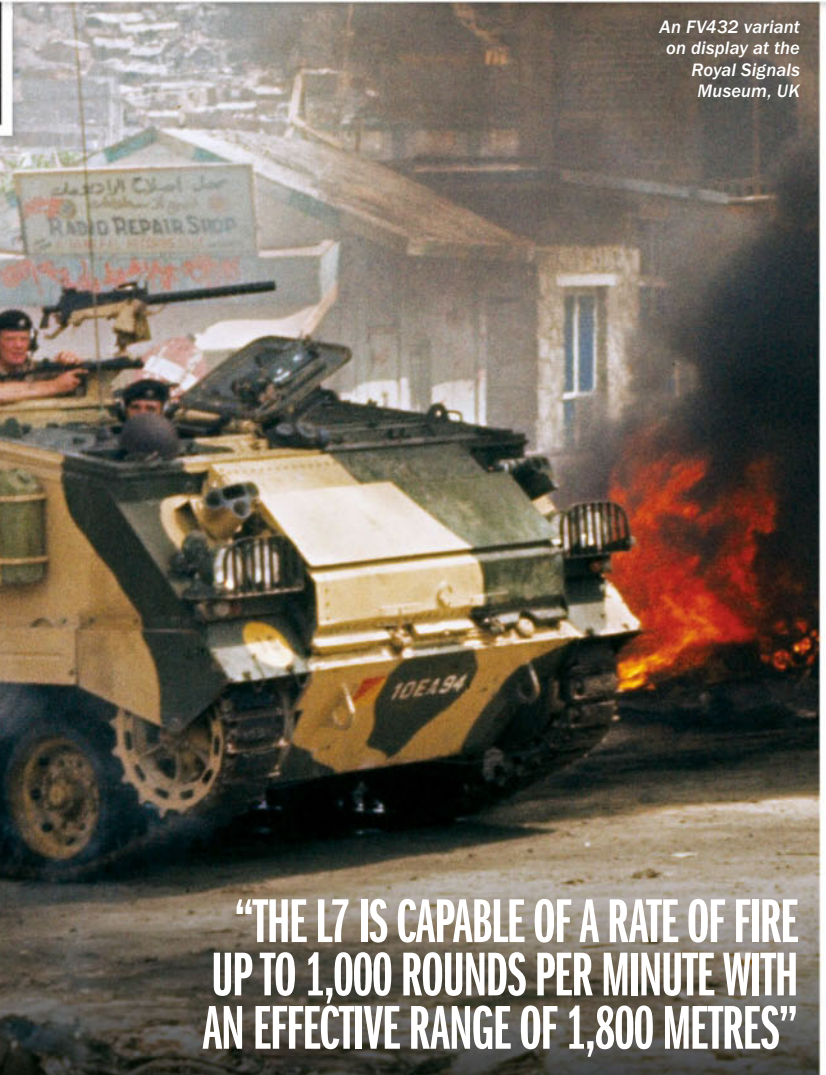
The primary weapon of the FV432 armoured personnel carrier is the 7.62mm L7 general-purpose machine gun. Based on the Belgian FN MAG system with only minor changes, the L7 is capable of a rate of fire up to 1,000 rounds per minute with an effective range of 1,800 metres. The mount for the L7 is located on the forward section of the commander's cupola, and the vehicle carries 1,600 rounds of belted ammunition. Royal Ordnance was the original producer of the L7, however, the weapon is now made by German manufacturer Heckler & Koch. Command vehicles are also likely to carry the Bren 7.62mm light machine gun along with 50 magazines of ammunition totalling 1,400 rounds.



*A British battalion UN carrier on operations during the Bosnian War*



*Smoke launchers mounted to the hull of the vehicle*



*An FV432 variant on display at the Royal Signals Museum, UK*

**“THE L7 IS CAPABLE OF A RATE OF FIRE UP TO 1,000 ROUNDS PER MINUTE WITH AN EFFECTIVE RANGE OF 1,800 METRES”**



**“THE TROOP COMPARTMENT IS LOCATED AT THE REAR OF THE VEHICLE AND ALLOWS 10 COMBAT-READY SOLDIERS TO BE SEATED ON BENCHES ALONG THE SIDES”**

*Up to ten combat personnel can be carried in the FV432*

## INTERIOR

The interior of the FV432 incorporates the driver's position forward and to the right. The commander sits directly behind the driver and is able to survey the surrounding ground through a cupola with 360-degree traverse and a trio of AFV No. 32 Mark 1 day periscopes. The commander also operates the cupola-mounted L7 machine gun. The engine is positioned to the left of the driver with an air intake forward and exhaust pipe exiting the hull on the left side. The troop compartment is located at the rear of the vehicle and allows 10 combat-ready soldiers to be seated on benches along the sides.



*The interior of the carrier was designed more for practicality than comfort*



The pictured FV432 Armoured Personnel Carrier is on display at the Royal Signals Museum, Blandford Forum. For more information visit [www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk](http://www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk)





## DESIGN

The FV432 bears a striking resemblance to the contemporary American M113 armoured personnel carrier. The FV432 hull, however, is constructed of welded steel, while its counterpart's is of lighter welded aluminum. The steel hull provides significant protection against enemy small-arms fire and shell fragments. While there are no gun ports, the FV432 is constructed to allow a complement of 10 combat troops to exit the vehicle and establish defensive positions swiftly through a large rear door. Benches in the troop compartment fold easily to convert the FV432 to a cargo transporter with a capacity of 8,090 pounds, or 3,670 kilograms.

*This pictured vehicle is an FV439, which is the signals variant of the FV432*

## SERVICE HISTORY

**THE FV432 REMAINS A VITAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE BRITISH ARMY'S SUPPORT AND LOGISTICS SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Although its induction to the British Army dates back to the Cold War, the FV432 armoured personnel carrier has managed to maintain a presence within the military well into the 21st Century, due partially to its versatile hull structure and quick conversion to multiple roles, through the use of "installation kits" that allow minor modifications to be rapidly accomplished. While some FV432 systems are no longer supported and components have become obsolescent, the vehicle served its main purpose from introduction in 1963 until it was replaced, in 1988, by the FV560 Warrior as the primary armoured personnel carrier of the British Army.

By the late 1990s, most military analysts expected the FV432 to be fully retired by 2014, but in 2005 it was announced that the vehicle's service life would extend to at least 2020. Plans to relieve the FV432 of its duties entirely were shelved as upgrades have continued. Early production

vehicles were designated as Mark 1, while those with the Rolls-Royce K60 multi-fuel engine were known as the Mark 2, some of which were equipped with NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) defence systems. In 2002, BAE Systems Land Systems introduced an upgrade that included a 250-horsepower Cummins B-series six-cylinder turbocharged diesel engine and a lighter powerplant that allowed for the installation of more protective armour. Other modifications were made to the transmission, and the driver's tillers were replaced with a yoke steering system similar to that of the Warrior. The first of these upgraded FV432s reached the Army in 2006.

During the course of its service, the FV432 has been deployed with British troops around the world, including the Balkans, Operation Desert Storm, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the subsequent fighting against insurgents in Afghanistan. During the latter deployments, the FV432 was found vulnerable to enemy IEDs (improvised explosive device) and RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) fire. Heavier armour protection was installed, and the variant was dubbed the Mark 3 'Bulldog'.



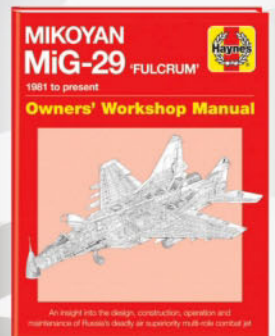
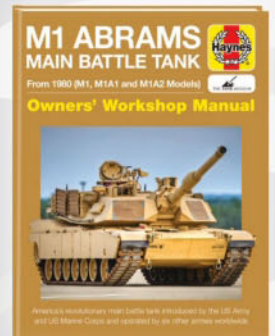
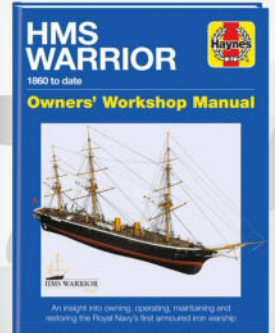
**"DURING THE COURSE OF ITS SERVICE, THE FV432 HAS BEEN DEPLOYED WITH BRITISH TROOPS AROUND THE WORLD"**

*An Iraqi armoured car burns at the side of the road during Operation Desert Storm*

Images: Alamy, Getty



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## REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books

## WAR STORIES

GRIPPING TALES OF COURAGE, CUNNING AND COMPASSION

**Author:** Peter Snow & Ann MacMillan **Publisher:** John Murray Publishers **Price:** £25 **Released:** 21 September 2017

PETER SNOW AND ANN MACMILLAN HAVE WRITTEN A HIGHLY READABLE BOOK ABOUT INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF HEROISM AND HUMANITY ACROSS VARIOUS CONFLICTS

*War Stories* is a fascinating account of ordinary men and women swept up in the turbulence of war who rose to the challenges of conflict with great acts of heroism and courage.

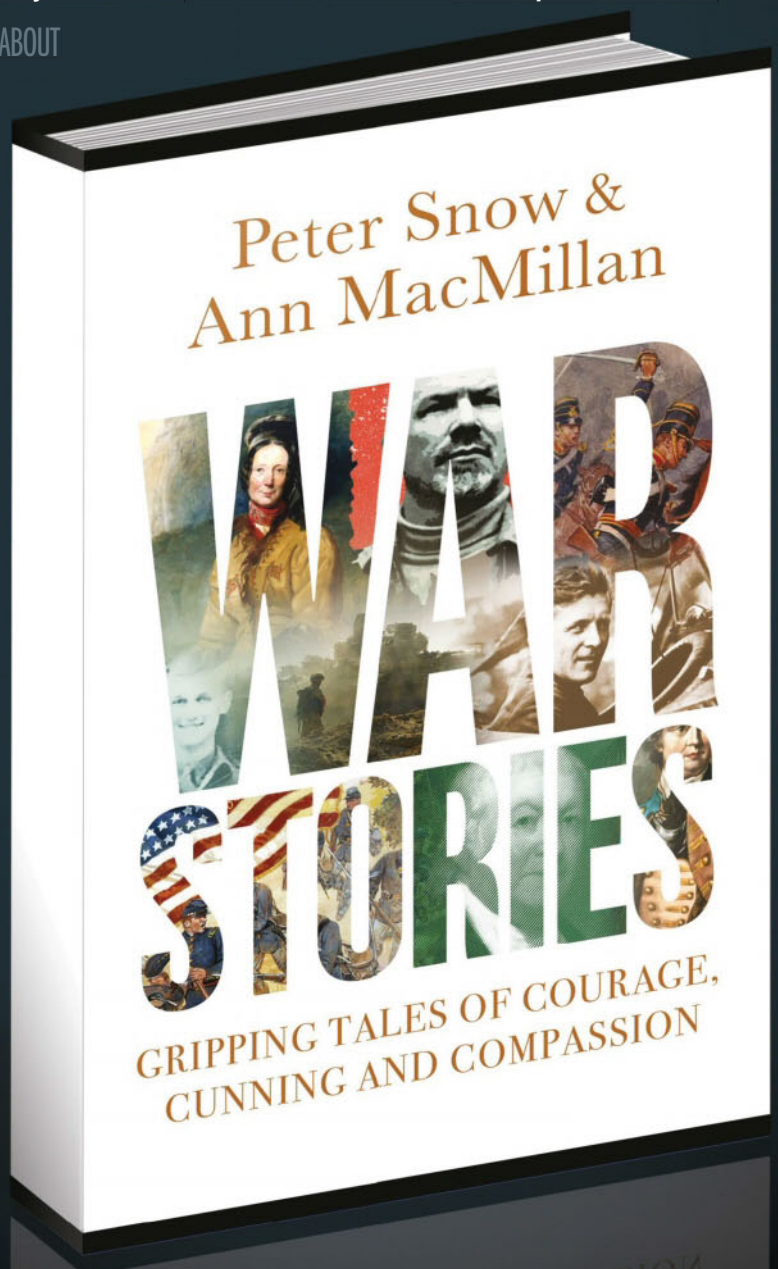
The book is written by the highly respected broadcaster and journalist Peter Snow and his wife Ann MacMillan, who also worked extensively in broadcasting and journalism and is the great-granddaughter of David Lloyd George. Their combined approach to the content has produced an intimate and varied account of fascinating stories of people at war that spans four centuries and four continents.

34 individuals are featured in the book and include Edward Seager, who survived the Charge of the Light Brigade, Krystyna Skarbek, who was a spy and saboteur during WWII, and Magdalene de Lancey, who nursed her dying husband at the Battle of Waterloo. As well as historical figures from the distant past Snow and MacMillan have also interviewed living heroes and survivors of war. These include Corran Purdon, who was a commando during the 'greatest ever raid' on St Nazaire in 1942, Mike Sadler, who is one of the last surviving founding members of the SAS during WWII, and Ahmed Terkawi, who was forced to escape from Syria between 2012-15.

The book is highly accessible to readers looking for specific topics and is split into helpful sections of interest such as 'Special Forces', 'Spies and Intelligence', 'Couples' and 'Compassion', amongst others. Each story is neither too long or too short and leaves the reader wanting to know more about these fascinating individuals. *War Stories* is a very engaging and recommendable work that is well paced and contains an underlying fascination with how seemingly ordinary people react in extraordinary circumstances.

**"EACH STORY IS NEITHER TOO LONG OR TOO SHORT AND LEAVES THE READER WANTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE FASCINATING INDIVIDUALS"**

To find out more about *War Stories*, buy *History of War* Issue 47 to read an exclusive interview with Peter Snow and Ann MacMillan as part of Raworths Harrogate Literature Festival. Released 5 October 2017.



# THE TWELVE APOSTLES

**Author:** Tim Pat Coogan **Publisher:** Head of Zeus **Price:** £8.99

A DISTURBING LOOK INTO THE STRUGGLE FOR IRISH INDEPENDENCE

A story as complex as Ireland's quest for independence needs to be told from both sides. In fact, there are more than two sides, with both British and Irish actions and reactions influenced by multiple viewpoints on either side of the Irish Sea – there was no single opinion in either camp.

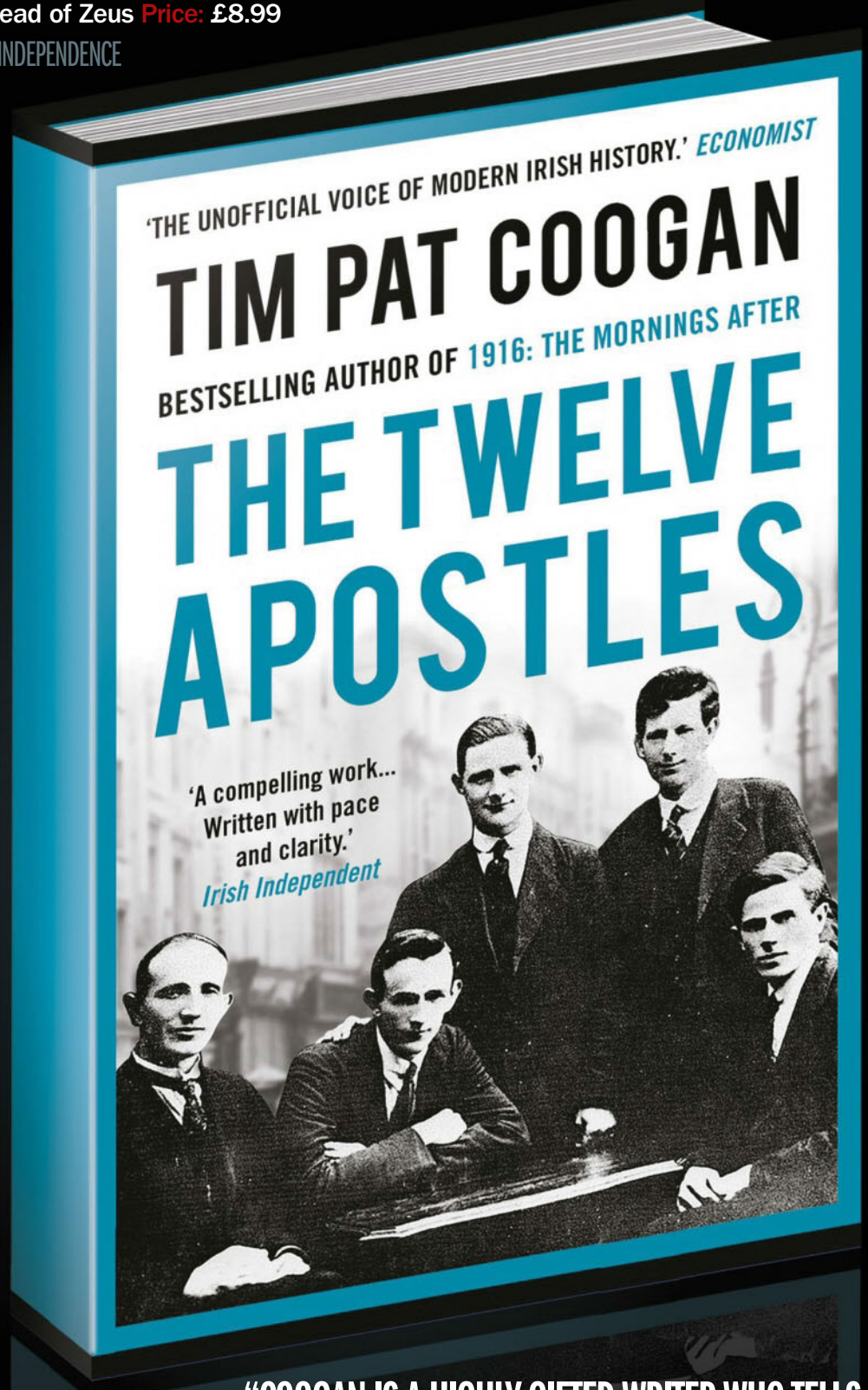
Tim Pat Coogan tackles the Irish side of the struggle, focusing on the formation of 'the Squad', a group of assassins also known as the Twelve Apostles. Coogan is up front about the fact that Michael Collins, the revolutionary leader who set up the band of hit-men, can be viewed as either a freedom fighter or a terrorist, depending on your viewpoint, but from the first sentence of this book it is clear how important a figure Coogan believes him to have been: "It is my contention," Coogan writes, "that Michael Collins was one of the most extraordinary men ever to have been born in Ireland." Having previously written a biography of Collins, Coogan is well placed to pass judgement.

It remains a fact, however, that for a British reader the book is often an uncomfortable read. The early days of the Irish Republican Army are inevitably overshadowed by what the organisation morphed into, with the bombing of 'soft targets', including shopping centres, repulsing most observers. Even the early days of the organisation were marked by the appropriation of goods with a note reading 'Taken in the name of the IRA' the only payment, and assassination of targets freely acknowledged to be good and decent men.

But the book is also uncomfortable for the detail it provides of British actions, including executions, brutality, intimidation and arson. A brief book review is no place to get into the endless intricacies of a subject as multifaceted as this. What can be said without doubt is that Coogan is a highly gifted writer who tells an engrossing story packed with insight and, in many cases, personal experience. He interviewed many of the key figures in the story and clearly has an intimate understanding of the period in question.

As well as detailing the formation of the Twelve Apostles (a somewhat misleading name because there were often more or fewer members of the squad), Coogan gives an accessible account of the build-up to violence, and if his work has a distinct Irish bias that is understandable – and there have been plenty of works on the subject with a British bias. Coogan's rattling pace, and the fairly modest length of the book, mean that the reader can gallop through it in a very short time, but that does not mean it is lightweight. Based mainly on Coogan's research for his earlier biography of Collins, it has been supplemented by recently released documents to give a fuller understanding of a painful and infinitely complex period in British and Irish history.

Uncomfortable reading it may be, but is also powerful and, at times, genuinely shocking.



**"COOGAN IS A HIGHLY GIFTED WRITER WHO TELLS AN ENGRASSING STORY PACKED WITH INSIGHT AND, IN MANY CASES, PERSONAL EXPERIENCE"**

# BATTLE FOR ANGOLA

## THE END OF THE COLD WAR IN AFRICA c1975-89

**Author:** Al J. Venter **Publisher:** Helion & Company **Price:** £35 **Released:** Out now

A TOUGH TO GET THROUGH ACCOUNT OF A CHAOTIC 14-YEAR PERIOD IN AFRICA'S RECENT HISTORY, WHICH IS CURSED BY UNNECESSARY DISCURSIONS

This is a puzzling book. Initial impressions are good – it is hefty, packed with text and photographs and clearly the product of a vast amount of inside information and first-hand knowledge. Once the reader ventures inside, however, problems become apparent.

Venter, a veteran writer with many publications to his credit, fails to define parameters for his book, resulting in a sprawling, unmanageable work. Even the choice of paper is eccentric, with the type of glossy stock generally reserved for photographs used throughout.

The introduction seems not to have been given even the most cursory edit, being littered

with tortuous sentences which sometimes change tense midway through. Pushing through the book quickly starts to feel like hacking through dense jungle.

Bafflingly, the author chooses to start his first chapter with a detailed account of a battle that took place in 1994, despite the date range specified in his own title. Anybody unfamiliar with this conflict is left wondering if this is a mistake, until the year 1994 pops up again, in the next chapter. Venter is ungenerous with dates throughout the book, starting many chapters with quotes that do not bear a time stamp, which might allow the reader to put them in some sort of context.

Civil wars and insurgencies are inevitably chaotic and confused affairs, but Venter has made little effort to guide his reader, presenting this conflict in a manner almost as chaotic as the actual events themselves.

Chapter 14, for example, is titled 'Civil War: The Start'. It seems a strange point, 220 pages into the book, to talk about the

start of the civil war, but it fits in well with the seemingly random arrangement of chapters that precede and follow it.

The problem is summed up by the blurb on the dust jacket, which proclaims that the author 'covers several ancillary uprisings and invasions, including the Herero revolt of the early 20th century; the equally troubled Ovambo insurrection, as well as the invasion of Angola by the Imperial German Army in the First World War.' What events in the First World War have to do with the 'The end of the Cold War in Africa c1975-89' is not clear, and the events are not even presented chronologically.

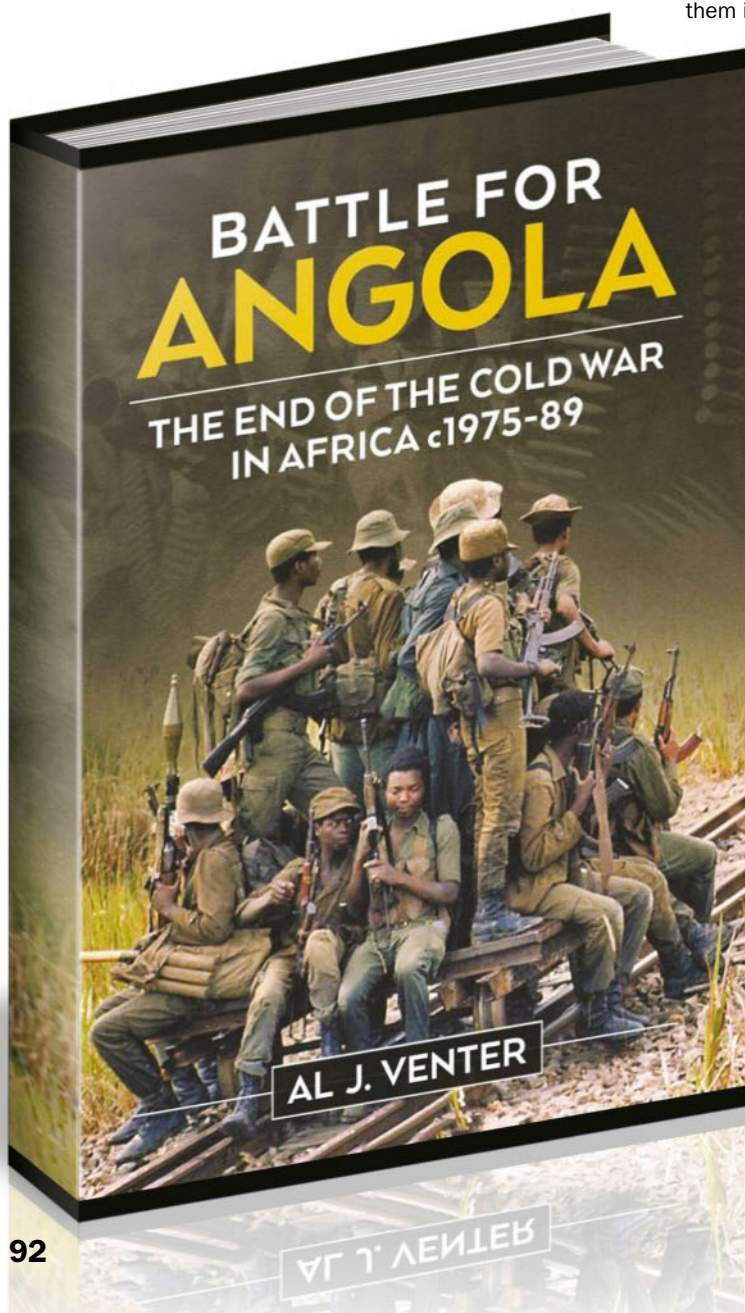
These problems are a genuine shame, because it is clear the author knows what he is talking about, and there is wonderfully detailed information on offer here. A seven-page glossary, for instance, might fill some readers with foreboding, but serves to demonstrate just how deep Venter's knowledge is. He could and should be an authoritative guide to this sprawling conflict, but appears unable to pick out a coherent narrative thread to convince the reader he knows where he is going. The result is a difficult, at times near-impossible book, which only the most dedicated of readers, or those with an unquenchable interest in this war, will be willing to persevere with for long.

*Below: War, famine and terror brought misery and hopelessness to southern and central Africa for much of the late 20th century.*



Image: Getty

**"IT IS HEFTY, PACKED WITH TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS AND CLEARLY THE PRODUCT OF A VAST AMOUNT OF INSIDE INFORMATION AND FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE"**



# HEROES OF JADOTVILLE

## THE SOLDIERS' STORY (2ND EDITION)

**Author:** Rose Doyle **Publisher:** New Island Books **Price:** £15.95 **Released:** Out now

THIS DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE 1961 SIEGE DURING THE CONGO CRISIS IS A POWERFUL STORY OF HEROISM AND INJUSTICE

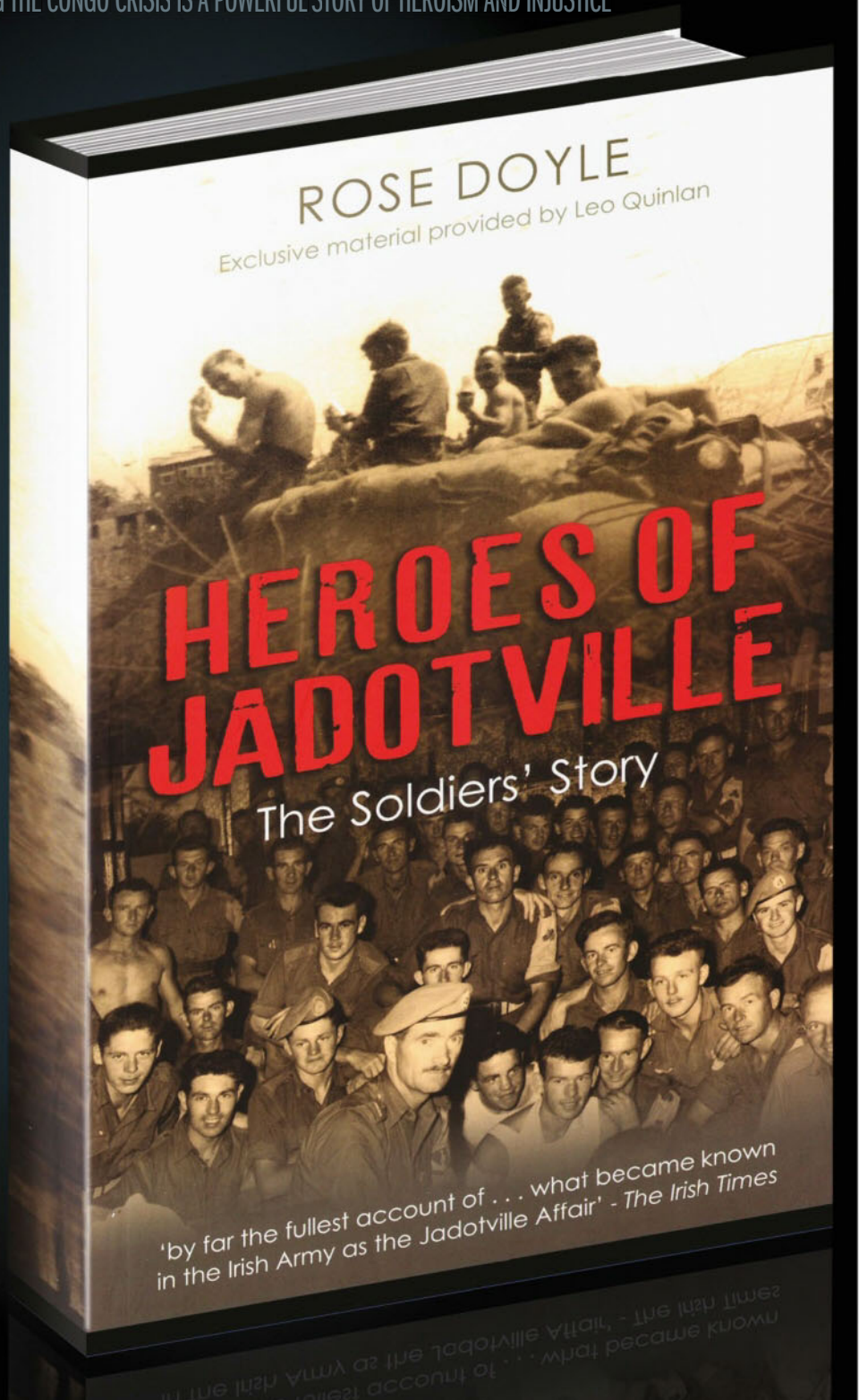
In recent years the 1961 Siege of Jadotville has come to wide attention thanks to campaigning by veterans and the release of a Netflix motion picture in 2016. It is a compelling tale of how 156 Irish UN peacekeepers inflicted hundreds of casualties against thousands of Katangan rebels and mercenaries during the Congo Crisis without incurring a single fatality. However, their superiors kept the harrowing experiences of the Jadotville veterans out of the public eye for decades in a notorious episode of military injustice.

The commander of A Company during the siege was Commandant Patrick 'Pat' Quinlan. Quinlan was a brilliant soldier who kept all of his men alive during the siege through a combination of discipline, initiative and tactical flair and then doggedly protected them during a tense captivity. Although Quinlan died in 1997 his niece Rose Doyle has written a full account of the siege with extensive material support from his son Leo.

First published in 2006, this second updated edition of *Heroes Of Jadotville* was released in 2016 and contains substantial interviews, reports, journals and letters. The book is a definitive and highly detailed primary source for the siege, and Doyle does an excellent job in exposing how the Irish peacekeepers became pawns in an international struggle for control of secessionist Katanga and its mineral wealth. This is important for historians of the period, particularly with the knowledge that the event was deliberately covered up for decades at the highest levels.

Despite its detail, the book is an engaging read and is considerably helped by Doyle's passionate mission to bring the soldiers' experiences to a wider audience. For anybody interested in both Irish military history and the Cold War this is essential reading.

**“THE BOOK IS A DEFINITIVE AND HIGHLY DETAILED PRIMARY SOURCE FOR THE SIEGE, AND DOYLE DOES AN EXCELLENT JOB IN EXPOSING HOW THE IRISH PEACEKEEPERS BECAME PAWNS IN AN INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF SECESSIONIST KATANGA”**



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# BAZOOKA SCOOTER



The Vespa 150 TAP only had a top speed of 64 km/h (40 mph) due to its small 150cc two-stroke engine and the weight of its weapon and ammunition

The Vespa 150 TAP was an unusual and oddly stylish addition to the French armed forces arsenal during the 1950s

The Vespa scooter has been an icon of mid-20th century motorcycle chic from Audrey Hepburn's famous ride in the 1953 film *Roman Holiday* to its distinct status in the British 'Mod' subculture during the 1960s. However, for a brief moment the diminutive Italian scooter was also considered to have potential as a fighting military vehicle.

During the 1950s France was faced with colonial insurgencies in Algeria and Indochina and a need arose to produce easily transportable artillery that could be quickly

deployed to war zones. The result – somewhat bizarrely – was the Vespa 150 TAP.

The military Vespa was manufactured in two production runs between 1956-59 by a French licensee and at least 500 scooters were produced. The 150 TAP was outfitted with an M20 anti-tank rifle that could fire a high-explosive warhead was accompanied by ammunition mounts. In good conditions the M20 could penetrate 100mm of armour from 640 metres away. The M20 could also use alternative warheads that could lay smokescreens. The weapon would not be used when the scooter was in motion and the

rider would dismount and fire the M20 from a tripod for accuracy.

The 150 TAP's primary function was swift logistics. With remarkably little design differences from the standard Vespa, it could be airdropped into a military theatre fully assembled and ready for action. This made the scooter a good anti-guerrilla weapon because enemy irregular soldiers could appear any time, even in remote locations. The 150 TAP was reportedly capable of destroying makeshift guerrilla fortifications in Algeria and Indochina but it was never used outside of French military engagements.

**“WITH REMARKABLY LITTLE DESIGN DIFFERENCES FROM THE STANDARD VESPA, IT COULD BE AIRDROPPED INTO A MILITARY THEATRE FULLY ASSEMBLED AND READY FOR ACTION”**



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